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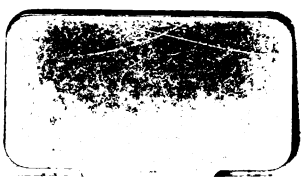

MAMMON;

OR,

COVETOUSNESS THE SIN OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

BY THE REV. JOHN HARRIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE GREAT TEACHER," &C.

TWENTY-FOURTH THOUSAND.

LONDON:
THOMAS WARD AND CO.,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1837.

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This book was written for money - a prize of 100 guineas & naturally is silent on the question of what men give for their incomes.

as distinct for what they do with them when received.

On the subject of Mammon's Masterpiece "Usury," or the power of gold to produce gold, he has not one word.

ORIGINAL ADVERTISEMENT.

MANY of the wisest and best of men are of opinion, that there is no sin so prevalent among professors of the gospel as the *love of money*, and yet there is no subject on which so little has been written well. The late Andrew Fuller says, "It will, in all probability, prove the eternal overthrow of more characters among professing people, than any other sin, because it is almost the only crime which can be indulged, and a profession of religion at the same time supported." *One hundred guineas*, besides the profits of its publication, will be presented to the author of the best Essay on this subject. Preference will be given to the most scriptural, poignant, and affectionate appeal to the judgment and conscience of those who professedly recognise the authority of revelation on avaricious hoarding, and on unchristian-like expenditure to gratify the lust of the eye and the pride of life, whilst they avow their obligations to redeeming mercy, and profess that themselves and all they have is not their own, but belongs and must be accounted for to Him who has said, "Occupy till I come;" then "give an account of thy stewardship, for

x Yes. Said. but to whom? the unjust steward - Are we to understand that these pages are written for unjust stewards?

thou mayest be no longer steward." The work wanted is one that will bear on *selfishness*, as it leads us to live to ourselves, and not for God and our fellow-men. It is requested that reference may be made to the different estimates of man who blesseth, and of God who abhorreth the covetous, Psalm x. 3; and to the tremendous consequences of accumulating property, as this sin is associated with the vilest of crimes, which exclude from the kingdom of heaven, Ephes. v. 5. The manuscript is to be sent to Dr. Conquest, 13, Finsbury-square, on or before the 1st of November, 1835, with a sealed letter containing the address of the writer. The Hon. and Rev. W. Baptist Noel, and the Rev. Dr. Pye Smith, have kindly engaged to be the arbitrators, and the award will be adjudged on the 1st of May, 1836.

Ephesians V. v 5

" For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of God "

This text hardly goes as far as to say that accumulating property is a vile crime with tremendous consequences.

ADJUDICATORS' ADVERTISEMENT.

In the early part of the last year, we were made acquainted with the proposal of a Christian friend, John Tricker Conquest, M.D., F.L.S., to confer a prize of one hundred guineas (which, with the accompanying expenses, amounts to the donation of about one hundred and fifty guineas) upon any Essay produced in competition, with the usual precautions to preserve the secrecy of the authors, upon the Sin of Covetousness; particularly with regard to the duties of piety and beneficence which, at the present time, are so incumbent on all men, but especially on those who would not abdicate the name of Christians. The request was made that we would be the umpires in determining to whom, in such a friendly competition, that prize would be the most righteously due. To that request we assented with many feelings of difficulty and reluctance; but the opinion of duty induced us to suppress them.

The requisite care was taken, that, till we had given our decision, we should not have the slightest knowledge, or any ground of conjecture whatsoever, concerning the writers of the Essays, which were no fewer than one hundred and forty-three.

* Beneficence was not mentioned when Robin Hood did with his money was of less consequence than what he did for it - or how he got it.

After much thought, and humbly seeking, by prayer and supplication, that we might be enabled to form a right judgment, we saw it to be our duty to declare the work now given to the public, to be the one entitled to Dr. Conquest's munificent prize. But we did not arrive at this determination, without a high feeling of gratitude and admiration at the mass of sanctified talent which had been brought before our view. Many of the Treatises, some of which are considerable volumes, are so replete with knowledge of the divine word, of the heart and character of man, and are so marked with comprehensive research, deep penetration, and Christian candour, as to have made us feel considerable regret at the thought of their being withheld from the public. We are conscientiously satisfied with the decision which we thus announce; but it is, at the same time, our earnest desire that some others of the Essays should be published. We are persuaded that the subject is not exhausted; and if, by the respective authors, our request for the publication should be granted, we trust the great cause of religion will be eminently served, and that the minds of those excellent persons will enjoy the delight which flows from extensive and the most important usefulness.

J. PYE SMITH.
BAPTIST W. NOEL.

Near London,
June 3, 1836.

PREFACE.

THE *history* of this Essay is sufficiently explained by the Advertisements prefixed. But concerning its *plan*, as the reader may possibly expect that the following pages are confined exclusively to the subject of Covetousness, the writer may be permitted to state the reasons which have led him to introduce two other topics—Selfishness, and Christian Liberality.

A glance at the original Advertisement will show, that while the sin of covetousness was the principal object in the eye of the benevolent Proposer, yet it was viewed and spoken of by him only as a part of the great system of selfishness. The writer felt himself, therefore, not merely permitted, but virtually required, to give this parent evil a primary place in his Essay. He is, however, free to confess, that had he not done so from a sense of obligation, he should most likely have done it from choice, since he

deems it an appropriate introduction to the principal subject. On this account, then, Selfishness, as the great antagonist of Christianity, and the source of Covetousness, forms the First Part.

Covetousness—the prevailing form of selfishness—is the Second, and principal, Part. Had the writer concluded with this part, he could not have considered the Essay complete unless a closing section had been added on the Cure of the evil under consideration. In that case, it would have been obvious to insist on a variety of familiar prudential maxims. But the love of money can only be remedied by "the expulsive power of a new affection." If we would not have the ivy to creep on the ground, we must erect an object which it can embrace, and, by embracing, ascend; and if we would detach the heart from embracing the dust, we must give it to another and a nobler object. The utter inefficacy of every thing short of this is evident. Hippocrates advised a consultation of all the physicians in the world for the cure of covetousness. The animadversions and appeals of Socrates not only failed to remedy the evil as it existed at Athens, but, judging from certain expressions in Plato's Apology of Socrates,

they were the means of enraging his enemies, and of procuring his condemnation. And about the time that the apostle Paul was denouncing the sin in his epistle to Timothy, Seneca was decrying the same evil, and composing his ethics; but, as if to show the impotence of his own precepts, "he was accused of having amassed the most ample riches,"—a circumstance which, though not the ostensible, was no doubt the real, cause of his finally falling a victim to the jealousy of Nero. But if such be the inefficacy of the precepts of the heathen philosopher, what is the prescription of the Christian apostle? Aware that the same means which destroy cupidity produce liberality, he does not concern himself so much with the death of covetousness as with the birth of charity. He says less about the *sin* when seeking its removal, than about the *duty* which is to displace it. He commands benevolence. He enjoins the "man of God" not only to *flee* the evil, but to *follow* the opposite virtues, and to flee the one *by* following the other. "O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness . . . . . Charge them that are rich in this world . . . . that

they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

Instead, therefore, of ending with a section on the cure of covetousness, the writer thinks he has copied inspired example, and increased the practical effect of the Essay, and better consulted the intentions of the party who has occasioned it, by adding a Third Part, on Christian Liberality. The cross of Christ is not merely a perpetual protest against the selfishness of the world: it has given a new object to our affections, and a new motive to our obedience—*that* object is Christ, and *that* motive is the love we bear to him. Till this love possess us, the sublimest maxims will fail to reach the heart; but from the moment we begin to be actuated by it, cupidity and all the baser passions are doomed to destruction.

Diodorus Siculus relates that the forest of the Pyrenean mountains being set on fire, and the heat penetrating to the soil, a pure stream of silver gushed forth from the bosom of the earth,

and revealed for the first time the existence of those rich lodes afterwards so celebrated. Covetousness yields up its pelf for sacred uses as unwillingly as if it were appointed to succeed the earth in the office of holding and concealing it; but let the melting influence of the cross be felt, let the fire of the gospel be kindled in the church, and its ample stores shall be seen flowing forth from their hidden recesses, and becoming "the fine gold of the sanctuary."

The *title* which the writer has adopted for the Essay designates covetousness *the* sin of the Christian church. He is aware that by bringing even an ordinary evil near to the eye, and prolonging one's gaze at it, it may go on swelling and enlarging in the apprehension, till it has come to fill the whole sphere of vision, to the exclusion and temporary oblivion of other evils of superior magnitude. That covetousness is not the only evil which the Christian church has to confess—that it is only one of many evils—he is quite sensible; and he trusts that the view which he has taken of its surpassing enormity is by no means chargeable with the effect of lessening our convictions of those other evils. All the sins of the Christian church

stand closely related; by action and reaction they are constantly producing and strengthening each other; and it is to its superior activity and influence in the production of those other sins that cupidity owes its bad pre-eminence. If *the love of money* then be the *root* of the evils in question, a description of its deadly nature should have the effect, not of diminishing, but augmenting our aversion to its destructive *fruits*. The writer feels convinced that the best mode of acquiring a clear, comprehensive, and impressive view of all the existing defects of the Christian church, as a whole, is to view them first separately and in succession; and that he who succeeds in laying open and correcting one of these defects, has gone far towards remedying all the rest. With the sincere desire that he may be the means of inflicting if only a single blow on *the root of all evil*, and of thus aiding the growth of that plant "which is from above ..... full of mercy and of good fruits," he would place this Essay at the feet of Him who deigns to commend the widow's mite.

PART THE FIRST.

SELFISHNESS THE ANTAGONIST OF THE GOSPEL.

SECTION I.

THE UNIVERSE DESIGNED TO DISPLAY AND ENJOY THE LOVE OF GOD.

"GOD is love:"—and the true theory of the universe is, that it is a vehicle or medium constructed expressly for the circulation and diffusion of his love. Full of blessedness himself, his goodness bursts forth, at first, into a *celestial* creation, replenished with bright intelligences, invested with the high prerogative of approaching as near to the Fountain of excellence as created natures can, to derive their happiness immediately from himself, and to derive it to the full amount of their capacity for enjoyment.

But heaven, with all its amplitude, was too confined for Infinite Love: he must enlarge the sphere of his beneficence; again his unconfined goodness

overflowed, and this terrestrial creation appeared —an enlargement of heaven. On that occasion, however, he chose to diversify the form of his love in the production of man,—a creature whose happiness, though equally with that of angels derived from Himself, should reach him through more indirect and circuitous channels. By creating, at first, one common father of the species, he designed that each individual should feel himself allied to all the rest, and pledged to promote their happiness. And by rendering us necessary to each other's welfare, he sought to train us to an humble imitation of his own goodness, to teach us the divine art of benevolence—to find and fabricate our own happiness from the happiness of others.

Now, if the former, the angelic creation, was meant to exemplify how much his creatures could *enjoy*, the latter was intended to show how much they could *impart;* for he meant every heart and every hand to be a consecrated channel for his love to flow in. Had his great idea been realized, the world would have exhibited the glorious spectacle of a whole race in family compact; clothed in a robe of happiness, with charity for a girdle; feasting at a perpetual banquet of beneficence; hailing

the accession of every new-born member as the advent of an angel, an addition to their common fund of enjoyment; and finding greater blessedness than that of passively receiving happiness in exercising the godlike prerogative of imparting it;—a whole order of intelligent beings, having *one heart and one mind;* a heart beating in concert with heaven, and diffusing, with every pulse, life, and health, and joy, to the remotest members of the body. The mere outline of the scene, as sketched by God in paradise, called forth audible expressions of his divine complacency; on surveying it from the height of the excellent glory, he pronounced it *good,* and the light of his countenance fell full upon it.

SECTION II.

SIN, AS SELFISHNESS, IS THE FRUSTRATION OF THE DIVINE PLAN.

But the awful invasion of sin frustrated the divine intention, destroyed it even in its type and model. Man aspired to be *as God;* and from that fatal moment, his great quarrel with his Maker has been, a determination to assert a state of independence altogether alien to his nature and condition. The standard of revolt was then erected, and the history of all his subsequent conduct has been the history of an insane endeavour to construct an empire, governed by laws, and replenished with resources, independent of God. The idolatry and sensuality, the unbelief, irreligion, and all the multiform sins of man, are resolvable into this proud and infernal attempt. Having by his

apostacy cut himself off from God, he affects to be a god to himself, to be his own sufficiency, his own first and last.

Such, however, is the intimate dependence of man on man, that it is impossible for him to attempt to realize this enormous fiction without being brought at every step into violent collision with the interests of his fellows. Love to God is the all-combining principle which was to hold each individual in adhesion to all the rest, and the whole in affinity with God; the loss of that, therefore, like the loss of the great law of attraction in the material world, leaves all the several parts in a state of repulsion to each other, as well as the whole disjoined from God. Having lost its proper centre in God, the world attempts not to find any common point of repose, but spends itself in fruitless efforts to erect an infinity of independent interests. Every kingdom and province, every family, every individual, discovers a propensity to insulate himself from the common brotherhood, and to constitute himself the centre of an all-subordinating and ever-enlarging circle. Such is the natural egotism of the heart, that each individual, following his unrestrained bent, acts as if

he were a whole kingdom in himself, and as if the general well-being depended on subjection to his supremacy. Setting up for himself, to the exclusion of every other being, he would fain be his own end,—the reason of all he does.

Under the disorganizing influence of sin, then, the tendency of mankind is towards a state of universal misanthropy; and were it not that some of their selfish ends can be attained only by partial confederations, the world would disband, society in all its forms would break up, every man's hand would be turned into a weapon, and all the earth become a battle-field in which the issues to be decided would be as numerous as the combatants, so that the conflict could end only with the destruction of every antagonist.

There is, be it observed, a wide difference between selfishness and legitimate self-love. This is a principle necessary to all sentient existence. In man, it is the principle which impels him to preserve his own life, and promote his own happiness. Not only is it consistent with piety, it is the stock on which all piety, in lapsed man, is grafted. Piety is only the principle of self-love carried out in the right direction, an dseeking its

supreme happiness in God. It is the act or habit of a man who *so* loves himself that he gives himself to God. Selfishness, is *fallen* self-love. It is self-love in excess, blind to the existence and excellence of God, and seeking its happiness in inferior objects by aiming to subdue them to its own purposes.

Self preservation is the first Law of nature

Self Sacrifice for the General Good is the Law of the Second Nature or being "Born Again"

SECTION III.

ALL SIN IS SELFISHNESS.

ACCORDINGLY, selfishness, as we have already intimated, is the universal form of human depravity; every sin that can be named is only a modification of it. What is avarice, but selfishness grasping and hoarding? What is prodigality, but selfishness decorating and indulging itself—a man sacrificing to himself as his own god? What is sloth, but that god asleep, and refusing to attend to the loud calls of duty? And what is idolatry, but that god enshrined—man worshipping the reflection of his own image? Sensuality, and, indeed, all the sins of the flesh, are only selfishness setting itself above law, and gratifying itself at the expense of all restraint. And all the sins of the spirit are only the same principle impatient of

contradiction, and refusing to acknowledge superiority, or to bend to any will but its own. What is egotism, but selfishness *speaking?* Or crime, but selfishness, without its mask, in earnest, and *acting?* Or offensive war, but selfishness confederated, armed, and bent on aggrandizing itself by violence and blood? An offensive army is the selfishness of a nation embodied, and moving to the attainment of its object over the wrecks of human happiness and life. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, *even of your lusts?*" And what are all these irregular and passionate desires, but that inordinate self-love which acknowledges no law, and will be confined by no rules—that selfishness which is the heart of depravity?—and what but this has set the world at variance, and filled it with strife? The first presumed sin of the angels that kept not their first estate, as well as the first sin of man,—what was it but selfishness insane? an irrational and mad attempt to pass the limits proper to the creature, to invade the throne, and to seize the rights, of the Deity? And were we to analyze the very last sin of which we ourselves are conscious, we should discover that selfishness, in one or other of its thousand forms, was its

parent. Thus, if love was the pervading principle of the unfallen creation, it is equally certain that selfishness is the reigning law of the world ravaged and disorganized by sin.

It must be obvious, then, that the *great want* of fallen humanity, is, a specific against selfishness, the epidemic disease of our nature. The expedient which should profess to remedy our condition, and yet leave this want unprovided for, whatever its other recommendations might be, would be leaving the seat and core of our disease untouched. And it would be easy to show that in this radical defect consists the impotence of every system of false religion, and of every heterodox modification of the true religion, to restore our disordered nature to happiness and God. And equally easy is it to show that the gospel, evangelically interpreted, not only takes cognizance of this peculiar feature of our malady, but actually treats it as the very root of our depravity, and addresses itself directly to the task of its destruction,—that, as the first effect of sin was to produce selfishness, so the first effect of the gospel remedy is to destroy that evil, and to replace it with benevolence.

SECTION IV.

THE GOSPEL, AS A SYSTEM OF BENEVOLENCE, OPPOSED TO SELFISHNESS.

It is the glory of the gospel that it was calculated and arranged on the principle of restoring to the world the lost spirit of benevolence. To realize this enterprise of boundless mercy, Jehovah resolved on first presenting to mankind an unparalleled exhibition of grace—an exhibition which, if it failed to rekindle the extinguished love of *man*, should, at least, have the effect of converting his angels into seraphs, and his seraphs into flames of fire. The ocean of the divine love was stirred to its utmost depths. The entire Godhead was—if with profound reverence it may be said—put into activity. The three glorious subsistencies in the Divine Essence moved towards

our earth. Every attribute and distinction of the Divine Nature was displayed: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, embarked their infinite treasures in the cause of human happiness.

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He could not give us more: and the vast propensions of his grace could not be satisfied by bestowing less. He would not leave it possible to be said that he could give us more: he resolved to pour out the whole treasury of heaven, to give us his all at once. "Herein is love!"—love defying all computation; the very mention of which should surcharge our hearts with gratitude, give us an idea of infinity, and replace our selfishness with a sentiment of generous and diffusive benevolence.

Jesus Christ came into the world as the embodied love of God. He came and stood before the world with the hoarded love of eternity in his heart, offering to make us the heirs of all its wealth. He so unveiled and presented the character of God, that every human being should feel it to be looking on himself, casting an aspect of benignity on himself. "He pleased not himself."

He did nothing for himself; whatever he did was for the advantage of man. Selfishness stood abashed in his presence. "He went about doing good." He assumed our nature expressly that he might be able to suffer in our stead; for the distinct and deliberate object of pouring out its blood, and of making its soul an offering for sin. He planted a cross, and presented to the world a prodigy of mercy of which this is the only solution, that he "so loved us." "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He took our place in the universe, absorbed our interest, opened his bosom, and welcomed to his heart the stroke which we had deserved.

And in all he did, he thought of the world. He loved man as man; he came to be the light and life of the world. He came and stood as the centre of attraction to a race of beings scattered and dissipated by the repulsive power of selfishness. He proposed by the power of the cross to "draw all men unto him." His heart had room for the whole race; and, opening his arms, he invited all to come unto him. The whole of his course was a history of pure and disinterested benevolence; one continued act of condescension; a vast and

unbroken descent from the heights of heaven, to the form of a servant, the life of an outcast, the death of a malefactor. His character is a study of goodness—a study for the universe; it is the conception of a Being of infinite amiableness seeking to engage and enamour the heart of a selfish world. The world, having lost the original idea of goodness and sunk into a state of universal selfishness, his character was calculated and formed on the principle of a laborious endeavour to recall the departed spirit of benevolence—to baptize it afresh in the element of love.

The office of the Holy Spirit is appointed and concurs to the same end. The world could not be surprised out of its selfishness, and charmed into benevolence by the mere *spectacle* even of divine love. *That* love can be understood only by sympathy; but for this, sin had disqualified us. According to the economy of grace, therefore, the exhibition of that love in God is to be made the means of producing love in us; the glorious spectacle of love as beheld in God, is to be turned into a living principle in us. For this end, the holy, unconfined, and infinite Spirit came down. His emblem is the wind; he came like a rushing

mighty wind, came with a fulness and a power as if he sought to fill every heart, to replenish the church, to be the soul of the world, to encircle the earth with an atmosphere of grace as real and universal as the elemental air which encompasses and circulates around the globe itself, that whoever inhaled it might have eternal life.

In the prosecution of his office he was to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto men. Heaven stooping to earth; God becoming man, dying upon the cross; infinite benevolence pouring out all its treasures for human happiness,—these were the things which he was to reveal,—the softening and subduing elements with which he was to approach and enter the human heart. In his hands, these truths were to become spirit and life. From the moment they were felt, men were to be conscious of a change in their relation both to God and to each other. A view of the great love wherewith he had loved them, was to fill their minds with a grand and overpowering sentiment of benevolence, which should melt their obduracy, cause them to glow with gratitude, and bind them fast to himself in the strongest bands of love. That love, with all the communicative-

ness of fire, was to extend to their fellow-men. Every weapon of revenge was to fall from their hands; every epithet of anger was to die on their lips; and where, before, they saw nothing but foes, they were henceforth to behold magnificent objects of affection, immortal beings, whom it would be happiness to love, and godlike to bless. The love of Christ would constrain them; glowing and circulating in their spiritual system, like the life-blood in their hearts, it would impel them to be active for his glory. Having communed with the heart of Infinite Love, they were to go forth and mingle with their race, filled with a benevolence like that which brought their Lord from heaven. Placing themselves at his disposal, they were to find that they were no longer detached from the species, but restored and related to all around; the sworn and appointed agents of happiness to the world.

The institution of a church, is only the continuation and application of the great scheme of love. Its offices were not to terminate on itself. It was constructed on the principle of consolidating and facilitating the operations of divine benevolence upon the world. The Son of God—

the great manifestation of that love—must personally withdraw from the earth; but his church, consisting of the aggregate of all on whom that love had taken effect, would continue to give visibility and activity to that love. He stopped not at the bare exhibition of his grace, but turned that exhibition into a means of implanting a kindred principle of love in the human heart; he stopped not at the implantation of this principle, but instituted a church for the express purpose of employing it for the benefit of the world; of employing it on the largest scale and with the greatest effect, and of thus conferring on it the power of propagating itself.

In the Christian church, every thing would conspire to keep alive in its members the new principle which Christ had brought into the world, and to give efficiency to its benign operations. Love was the principle which would bring them together, which would draw them from their distant and detached positions, harmonize their jarring natures, and fuse all their hearts and interests into one. Converging from the most opposite points, they would meet at the cross; and the principle which had drawn them to that would

bind them to each other. Each would behold in every other a living memorial of his Lord; and see, in the grace of Christ to the whole, a token of that grace to himself in particular. Here, love, as an agent or instrument, either giving or receiving, was to find itself in perpetual exercise, and to behold its image reflected in every face.

But love is diffusive; it would not confine its offices to those only who could repay them; bursting the limits of the church, it would seek the world. Every heart in which it glowed finding itself allied to every other Christian heart, and the whole feeling themselves reinforced with the benevolence of heaven, would meditate the conversion of the world. As often as they approached the throne of grace, they would find themselves touching the springs of universal and almighty love, — and would they not yearn to behold these springs in activity for the world? As often as they thought of that love embracing themselves, their own love would burn with tenfold fervour; the selfishness of their nature would be consumed, the most enlarged designs of benevolence would seem too small, the most costly sacrifices too cheap; they would feel as if they

must precipitate themselves into some boundless field of beneficence; as if they could only breathe and act in a sphere which knows no circumference. As often as they surveyed their infinite resources in Christ, and perceived that when all their own necessities were supplied those resources were infinite still, they would naturally remember the exigencies of others; would feel that they had access to *the whole*, that they might instrumentally impart of that abundance to others. The feast would be prepared, the provisions infinite; and when they were seated at the banquet, and contrasted that plenitude of food with the fewness of the guests, they would conceive a fixed determination not to cease inviting till all the world should be sitting with them at the feast of salvation. *The name* they were to bear would perpetually remind them of him from whom they had derived it; and would it be possible for them to have their minds inhabited by the glorious idea of Christ, without receiving corresponding impressions of greatness?—it would be associated in their minds with all things great, beneficent, godlike, impelling them to imitate to the utmost his diffusive goodness. But not only their *name*, from

him they would have derived their *nature;* by necessity of nature, therefore, they would pant to behold universal happiness. Not only would they feel that every accession to their number was an increase of their happiness; as long as the least portion of the world remained unblessed and unsaved, they would feel that their happiness was incomplete. Nothing less than the salvation of the whole world would be regarded by them as the complement of their number, the fulfilment of their office, the consummation of their joy.

Thus the Christian church, like the leaven hid in the meal, was to pervade and assimilate the entire mass of humanity. At first, it would resemble an *imperium in imperio*, a dominion of love flourishing amidst arid wastes of selfishness; but extending on all sides its peaceful conquests, it would be seen transforming and encompassing the world. Combining and concentrating all the elements of moral power, it would move only to conquer, and conquer only to increase the means of conquest. It would behold its foes converted into friends; and then, assigning to each an appropriate station of duty, would bid him forthwith go and try upon others the power of that principle

which had subdued his own opposition—the omnipotent power of love. Thus thawing, and turning into its own substance, the icy selfishness of humanity, the great principle of benevolence would flow through the world with all the majesty of a river, widening and deepening at every point of its progress by the accession of a thousand streams, till it covered the earth as the waters cover the sea. They who, under the reign of selfishness, had sought to contract the circle of happiness around them till they had reduced it to their own little centre, under the benign and expansive influence of the gospel would not only seek to enlarge that circle to embrace the world, but to multiply and diffuse themselves in happiness to its utmost circumference. Feeling that good is indivisible; that to be enjoyed in perfection by one, it must be shared and possessed by all, they would labour till all the race were blended in a family compact, and were partaking together the rich blessings of salvation; till, by their instrumentality, the hand of Christ had carried a golden chain of love round the world, binding the whole together, and all to the throne of God.

It is clear, then, that the entire economy of salvation is constructed on the principle of restoring to the world the lost spirit of love; this is its boast and glory. Its advent was an era in the universe. It was bringing to a trial the relative strength of love and hatred;—the darling principle of heaven, and the great principle of all revolt and sin. It was confronting selfishness in its own native region, with a system of benevolence prepared, as its avowed antagonist, by the hand of God itself. So that, unless we would impugn the skill and power of its Author, we must suppose that it was studiously adapted for the lofty encounter. With this conviction, therefore, we should have been justified in saying, had we been placed in a situation to say it, "Nothing but the treachery of its professed friends can defeat it; if they attempt a compromise with the spirit of selfishness, there is every thing to be feared; but let the heavenly system be worked fairly, and there is every thing to be expected,—its triumph is certain."

But *has* its object been realized? More than eighteen hundred years have elapsed since it was brought into operation,—has its design succeeded?

Succeeded! Alas! the question seems a taunt, a mockery. We pass, in thought, from the picture we have drawn of what the gospel was *intended* to effect, to the contemplation of things *as they are*, and the contrast appals us. We lift our eyes from the picture, and, like a person awaking from a dream of happiness to find the cup of wretchedness in his hand, the pleasing vision has fled. Selfishness is every where rife and rampant.

But why is it thus? why has the gospel been hitherto threatened with the failure of a mere human experiment? When first put into activity, did it discover any want of adaptation to its professed purpose? The recollection that God is its Author, forbids the thought. It *is the wisdom of God*, and *the power of God*. But besides this, as if to anticipate the question, and to suggest the only reply,—as if in all ages to agitate an inquiry into the *apparent* inefficacy of the gospel, and to flash conviction in the face of the church as often as the question is raised, *when first the gospel commenced its career, it triumphed in every place.* No form of selfishness could stand before it. It went forth conquering and to conquer. "And all that believed were together, and had all things

common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." They went every where preaching the gospel. They felt that they held in their hands the bread of life for a famishing world, and they "could not but" break and dispense it. The love of Christ constrained them. As if his last command were constantly sounding in their ears, they burned to preach the gospel to every creature. They felt the dignity and glory of their position,—that they were constituted trustees for the world; executors of a Saviour who had bequeathed happiness to man; guardians of the most sacred rights in the universe. In the execution of their godlike trust, death confronted them at every step: persecution, armed, brought out all its apparatus of terror and torture, and planted itself full in their path;—but none of these things moved them; they scarcely saw them; they went on prosecuting their lofty task of making the world happy, for they were actuated by a love stronger than death. The world was taken by surprise,—never before had it beheld such men, —every thing gave way before them,—city after city, and province after province, capitulated,—

yet the whole secret of their power was *love*. Diversified as they were in mind, country, condition, age, one interest prevailed; one subject of emulation swallowed up every other—which should do most for the enlargement of the reign of love. A fire had been kindled in the earth, which consumed the selfishness of men wherever it came.

SECTION V.

SELFISHNESS, THE SIN OF THE WORLD, HAS LONG SINCE BECOME THE SIN OF THE CHURCH.

AGAIN, then, we repeat the momentous inquiry; —and we would repeat it slowly, solemnly, and with a desire to receive the full impression of the only answer which can be given to it;—what has prevented the gospel from fulfilling its first promise, and completely taking effect? what has hindered it from filling every heart, every province, the whole world, the entire mass of humanity, with the one spirit of divine benevolence? why, on the contrary, has the gospel, the great instrument of divine love, been threatened, age after age, with failure? *Owing, solely, to the treachery of those who have had the administration of it; owing, entirely, to the selfishness of the church.*

No element essential to success has been left out of its arrangements; all those elements have always been in the possession of the church; no new form of evil has arisen in the world; no antagonist has appeared there, which the gospel did not encounter and subdue in its first onset; yet at this advanced stage of its existence, when it ought to be reposing from the conquest of the world, the church listens to an account of its early triumphs, as if they were meant only for wonder, and not for imitation; as if they partook too much of the romance of benevolence to be again attempted; — now, when it ought to be holding the world in fee, it is barely occupying a few scattered provinces as if by sufferance, and has to begin its conflicts again. And, we repeat, the only adequate explanation of this appalling fact is, *that selfishness, the sin of the world, has become the prevailing sin of the church.*

This statement, indeed, may, at first sight, appear inconsistent with the truth, that the church is the only depository and instrument of divine benevolence. But to reconcile the two, it is only necessary to remember that every component part of that church, each Christian heart taken indivi-

dually, is only an epitome of the state of the world —partially sanctified and partially depraved—containing in it, indeed, a divine principle of renovation, and a principle which is destined finally to triumph, but which has, meanwhile, to maintain its ground by perpetual conflict, and, at times, to struggle even for existence. While, viewed collectively, the church may be regarded in the light of a vast hospital, filled with those who are all, indeed, under cure, but who have all to complain of the inveteracy of their disease, and of the consequent slowness of the healing process. It depends, therefore, on the degree to which they avail themselves of the means of recovery, whether or not they shall become active and instrumental in the recovery of their perishing fellow-men. And the charge alleged against them is, that they have not abandoned themselves to the divine specific, the great remedy of the gospel; in consequence of which, they continue to labour all their lifetime under the disqualifying effects of their original disease, and their healing instrumentality is entirely lost to the diseased and dying world. *Selfishness, the disease of the world, is the prevailing malady of the church.*

It would be easy and interesting to trace the steps of that awful transition by which the church passed from the ardour of its first love, to the cold selfishness which it afterwards exhibited. Viewed in its primitive state, it appears a flaming sacrifice, offering itself up in the fires of a self-consuming zeal for the salvation of the world. But viewed again after the lapse of a few centuries — how changed the spectacle!—it is offering up that very world to its own selfishness! Its own fires are burnt out; and it is seen kindling the strange fires of another sacrifice; devoting and presenting the world as a victim at its various shrines of wealth, and pride, and power. From being an image of the divine disinterestedness and love, extorting the admiration of the world, and winning men to an imitation of its benevolence, it passed through the various stages of spiritual declension, calculating consequences, growing indifferent to its peculiar duties, turning its influence into worldly channels, subordinating every thing sacred to worldly greatness and gain, till it had become a monstrous personification of an all-grasping selfishness, from which the world itself might derive hints and lessons on the art of self-

aggrandisement, but derive them in vain for its own escape.

Instead, however, of enlarging on the early operations of selfishness, it will be more relevant to the design before us to show the fact and mode of its operation in the church at present. For long and triumphant as its reign has been, its days are numbered. The gospel is not to sustain a final defeat. The church of Christ is yet to realize the glorious intentions of its Heavenly Founder—to refill the world with love. Its failure hitherto is only to be regarded in the light of a severe, indeed, but temporary, reverse. Its final victory is not contingent. The past has, at least, demonstrated its vitality; the present is evincing its elasticity; the future shall bear witness to its triumphs. So that in aiming to indicate the movements and operations of its great antagonist, selfishness, we feel that we are contributing, in however humble a degree, to retrieve its lost honours, and to point it the way to victory.

SECTION VI.

THE FORMS OF SELFISHNESS IN THE CHURCH.

Of selfishness it may be said, as of its archetype, Satan, that it "takes all shapes that serve its dark designs." One of the most frequent forms in which it appears is that of party spirit; and which, for the sake of distinction, may be denominated, *the selfishness of the sect.* Circumstances, perhaps, inevitable to humanity in its present probationary state, have distributed the Christian church into sections; but as the points of difference which have divided it are, *for the most part*, of much less importance than the vital points in which these sections agree, there is nothing in the nature of such differences to necessitate more than circumstantial division, there is every thing in their principles of agreement to produce and per-

petuate substantial oneness, and cordial love. But this the demon of selfishness forbids. It erects the points of difference into tests of piety. It resents any real indignity offered by the world to the entire church, far less than it resents any supposed insult offered by other sections of the church to its own party. The general welfare is nothing in its eye, compared with its own particular aggrandisement. When Christians should have been making common cause against the world, selfishness is calling on its followers to arm, and, turning each section of the church into a battlemented fortress, frowns defiance on all the rest. It is blind to the fact that God, meanwhile, is employing them all, and smiling upon them all; or, if compelled to behold it, eyeing it askance with a feeling which prevents it from rejoicing in their joy. When the church should have been spending its energies for the good of man, devoting its passions like so much consecrated fuel, for offering up the great sacrifice of love which God is waiting to receive, it is wasting its feelings in the fire of unholy contention till that fire has almost become its native element. And thus Christianity is made to present to the eye of an indiscriminating world

the unamiable and paradoxical spectacle of a system which has the power of attracting all classes to itself, but of repelling them all from each other;—forgetting, that in the former they see Christianity triumphing over selfishness, and in the latter selfishness defeating Christianity.

Bigotry, is another of the forms in which an inordinate self-love delights—*the selfishness of the creed.* In this capacity, as in the former, its element is to sow division where nothing should be seen but union—among the members of the family of Christ. The great scheme of mercy originated in a love which consented to overlook the enmity and fierce rebellion of its objects, or, rather, which looked on that enmity only to pity and provide for its removal; but those who profess to have been the objects of that love, will not allow each other the liberty of the slightest conscientious difference, without resenting that difference as a personal and meditated affront; as if the natural enmity of their hearts against God had only changed its direction, and had found its legitimate objects in his people. Under a pretence of zeal for God, bigotry violates the sanctuary of conscience, and creates an inquisition in the midst

of the church. Erecting its own creed into a standard of universal belief, it would fain call down fire from heaven, or kindle a furnace seven times hotter than an ordinary anger would demand, for all who presume to question its infallibility;—thus justifying the world in representing the *odium theologicum* as a concentration of all that is fierce, bitter, and destructive, in the human heart. The Lord they profess to obey, would have them to embrace with a comprehensive affection all who exhibit the least traces of his image; but the strongest traits, the most marked conformity to his likeness, is a very uncertain introduction to their hearts compared with a likeness of creed.

Nearly akin to this is, what, for the sake of convenience, may be denominated, *the selfishness of the pulpit:* that fearful spirit which presumes to limit what God meant to be universal—the overtures of redemption to a ruined world. Selfishness, indeed, in this repulsive form, is of comparatively limited existence; and, as if by a judicial arrangement of providence, it is commonly, in our day, associated with errors and tempers so unamiable, that its own nature forbids it to be-

come general. It daringly undertakes to "number Israel;" to determine not only that few will be saved, but who that few will be. Its ministers, faithful to their creed, stand before the cross, and hide it; lest men should see it who are not entitled or intended to behold it;—a danger which they jealously avoid, a responsibility they would tremble to incur. The gospel charters redemption to the world,—but they have heard that there are divine decrees; and until they can logically reconcile their views of the divine inflexibility with the universality of the divine compassion, the charter must stand over; and souls perish unwept; and the gospel of Christ, God's great gift, the adequate image of the infinitude of his love, be branded with the stigma of exclusiveness. Put the affairs of the kingdom of Christ into their hands,—and, under the affectation of a pious dread of contravening the sovereign purposes of God, or of forestalling his appointed time,—they would forthwith call home the agents of mercy in distant lands, break up the institutions, and stop the whole machinery, of Christian benevolence. In the midst of a famishing world, they would establish a monopoly of the bread of life; and,

though assailed on all sides by the cries of a race in the pains of death, would not cease to exchange smiles radiant with self-complacency while continuing to cater to their own pampered appetites. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." They know not that they are perverting that which was meant to be the destruction of selfishness, into its very aliment and nurse; they know not, that, next to the *destruction* of the gospel, they could not furnish Satan with a greater triumph than thus to silence its inviting voice, and to suppress the agencies of its disciples. It is to arrest the course of the angel having the everlasting gospel and flying through the midst of heaven, and to confine him to their own contracted horizon; to demonstrate that nothing is too monstrous to be apprehended from our nature when its selfish tendencies are the materials employed, since it can construct a system out of the gospel itself, whose most appropriate title would be, "Christianity made selfishness."

The selfishness of the pew, is another form of the same pervading evil; incomparably less pernicious, indeed, than the last mentioned, but far

more extensive in its existence. This, is that modification of selfish piety which lives only to be *personally comforted;* which, in all its reading and hearing, makes its own individual comfort, not a means, but an end; and which, in pursuit of that end, goes up and down in the world, crying, "Give, give, and is never satisfied." The divine Redeemer describes the faithful shepherd as leaving the ninety and nine sheep for a time, to traverse the wilderness in quest of *the one wanderer.* But this unlovely spirit, reversing the touching picture, would have him neglect ninety and nine wanderers, to attend exclusively to one folded sheep. An epicure in comfort, it is impatient if the cup of consolation be removed from its lips for a moment, though that moment was only seized to say to a famishing multitude, "Come now, for all things are ready." Devout only in little things, it cannot bear to have its mind diverted from its own personal and particular state, even though the sight to which its attention is called is the wants of a world. It will consent to listen just once a year to the claims of the perishing heathen; but it feels as if more than that were too much, were pressing the subject unnecessarily on

its attention. The amplitude of the divine love seeks to comprehend the universe in its large and life-giving embrace, and calls on our affections to arise and follow it in its vast diffusion; but this selfishness stays at home, builds itself in, sees no glory in that love but as it embraces a single point, and that point itself.

Consistent with itself, this same spirit, if followed from public into private, is found to become *the selfishness of the closet.* It penetrates even to the throne of God, and there where, if any where, a man should give himself up to what is godlike, there where he should go to engage an almighty agency in the behalf of his race, it banishes from his thoughts every interest but his own, rendering him a suppliant for himself alone. It makes him as exclusively intent on his own individual advantage, as if spiritual, like worldly good, could not be shared by others without diminishing the portion to be enjoyed by himself.

Let us place ourselves in imagination near to the throne of God,—and what do we behold?—a number of needy suppliants returning daily to his throne, a large proportion of whom are as unmindful of each other as if each came from a dif-

ferent world and represented a distinct race of beings; as completely absorbed in their respective interests as if the welfare of the species depended on their individual success. There, where each should think of all, and feel himself blended with the great whole, he virtually disowns kindred with all, deserts the common interest, and strives for himself alone. They come and lay their hand upon the springs of an agency, which, if put into motion, would diffuse happiness through the world; but they leave that agency unsolicited and unmoved. The blessed God calls them into his presence, partly, that they might catch the radiance of his throne, and transmit it to a world immersed in the shadow of death; but provided they catch a ray of that light for themselves, the gloom of the world may remain unrelieved. He points out the infinity of their resources in himself, gives them access to more than they need for themselves, in order that they may go and instrumentally administer to the wants of others. He calls them to his throne as a royal priesthood, as intercessors for the race; but instead of imploring the divine attention to the wants of the world, each of them virtually calls it off from every other

object to concentrate it upon a unit, and that unit himself. He has so laid his vast and gracious plans, that he can be enjoyed fully only in communion, in the great assembly of heaven; but in contravention of these plans, each one seeks to contract for himself separately with God, as if he would fain engross to himself the whole of the divine goodness. What an affecting view is this of the power of selfishness! and of the infinite patience of God in bearing with it!

But the form under which this Protean evil works more insidiously and extensively, perhaps, than in any which have been specified, is that of a worldly spirit;—we will venture to call it *the selfishness of the purse.*

It was the design of Christ, in redeeming and saving his people by the sacrifice of himself, to convince them that his interest and theirs were identical, that he and they were one, that to enjoy any prosperity distinct from the prosperity and glory of his kingdom was impossible. And by further proposing to employ their instrumentality for the enlargement of his kingdom, he intended to give them an opportunity of evincing their love to his name, and of consecrating all the means

they could abstract from the necessary demands of time, to the great cause of salvation. It was only warrantable to expect, that the exhibition of his love, and the claims of his kingdom, coming with full force upon their hearts, would overwhelm all worldly considerations; that they would bring forth their wealth, and present it with the ardent devotion of an offering; that henceforth they would desire to prosper in the world only that they might have the more to lay at his feet; that they would instantly devise a plan of self-denial, each one for himself, the object of which should be to augment to the utmost their contributions to his cause; that nothing but the fruits of such *self-denial* would be dignified with the name of Christian charity; and that the absence of such self-denial, and the consequent fruits of it, would be regarded as a forfeiture of the Christian name; that the church, as "the bride, the Lamb's wife," would feel that she had, that she could have, no interest apart from his, that all her worldly possessions belonged to him, and that she would gratefully and cheerfully surrender them to him, wishing that for his dear sake they had been ten thousandfold more.

To ask if such is the conduct of the Christian church would be worse than trifling. "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." As if their interest and his were two, separate, opposite, irreconcileable things; or, as if they had never heard of the grace, the claims, or even the name of Christ, the great majority of Christian professors may be seen, from age to age, pursuing their own ends as eagerly, and wasting their substance as selfishly, as the world around them.

They seek their worldly prosperity. They know of nothing equal to that. Every thing is made to give way to that. The cause of Christ itself must wait for that, and is only held secondary to it. What! neglect any thing which tends to increase their gains!—they would deem themselves mad to think of it; even though the salvation of an immortal soul had to wait in consequence. And thus, while God has to complain of them as slothful and unfaithful in his service, Mammon can boast of them as among his most diligent and devoted servants.

They seek their worldly ease and enjoyment. *Self*, *self*, is the idol to which they are perpetually sacrificing: the monster, whose ravenous

appetite they are perpetually feasting, and which eats up nearly all they have. So great is the cost of dressing and decorating this idol, of serving and feasting it, of consulting its voracious appetites, and ministering to its various gratifications, that but little is left for the cause of Christ. It is "a soul-wasting monster, that is fed and sustained at a dearer rate, and with more costly sacrifices and repasts, than can be paralleled by either sacred or other history; that hath made more desolation in the souls of men, than ever was made in their towns and cities where idols were served with only human sacrifices, or monstrous creatures satiated only with such food; or where the lives and safety of the majority were to be purchased by the constant tribute of the blood of not a few! that hath devoured more and preyed more cruelly upon human lives than Moloch or the Minotaur!"* Self, is Dives in the mansion, clothed in purple, and faring sumptuously every day,—the cause of Christ, is Lazarus lying at his gate, and fed only with the crumbs which fall from his table.

These are some of the leading forms of that

* Howe.

demon of selfishness, whose name is Legion; and which, in every age, has been the great antagonist of the gospel, threatening at times even to drive the principle of benevolence from the world. What but this is it which keeps the piety of the individual professor, joyless to himself?—which renders many a congregation of professing Christians, a company of inactive useless men, assembling merely for their own religious ends, and separating only to pursue their own worldly ends, as regardless of the welfare of others as if none but themselves inhabited the earth?—which turns the several denominations of which the Christian church is composed, into so many sources of mutual disquietude and weakness?—and which makes that church the scorn of an infidel world, instead of its boast and glory? It has defrauded millions of the offer of eternal life:—and what but selfishness is, at this moment, defrauding God of his glory long since due, and the church of its promised prosperity? and the world of the redemption provided for it? Well has self been denominated the great Antichrist; for, though it may not be the antichrist of prophecy which is to appear in the latter day, it is the antichrist of every day,

and every age; the great usurper of the rights of Christ, the great antagonist and obstacle to his universal reign. "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

That we do not exaggerate its pernicious power, let it only be supposed that selfishness, in all the forms we have specified, has been banished from the church,—and what would ensue? Each denomination of Christians, without sacrificing its distinctive character, would embrace and seek to ally itself as closely with all the rest as a community of interest, hope, and affection, could bind it. Each creed would have the necessity and divinity of brotherly love among its primary articles; teaching the Christian that a heart glowing with affection to "the brethren," exhales the incense most acceptable to God; that such love is God in man. Devotion, no longer terminating in itself, would go to God, and plead for the world. Piety, no longer seeking after comfort as an end, would find it without seeking; find it in the paths of Christian activity and usefulness. Like the piety of apostolic times, it would be exempted from all the morbid complaints of a slothful religion, and would find its health and enjoyment in living to Christ.

The whole church would be kindled into a sacrificial flame for his glory, into which every Christian would cast the savings of his self-denial as appropriate fuel for feeding a flame so sacred. A love which would yearn over the whole human race; a zeal which would be constantly devising fresh methods of usefulness, denying itself, and laying itself out for God; and a perseverance which would never rest till the whole family of man should be seated at the banquet of salvation—these would be the prevailing features of the entire Christian community. From such a scene the eternal Spirit could not be absent; its very existence would demonstrate his presence. The tabernacle of God would be with men upon the earth. God would bless us, and all the ends of the earth would fear him.

Now of all this, selfishness is defrauding us. It is keeping the universe in suspense. Like a spring-season held back by the chilling breath of winter, all things are waiting for the desired change; when the Christian church, bursting forth as in the vernal beauty of its youth, shall become another paradise, full of melody, incense, and joy.

PART THE SECOND.

COVETOUSNESS,—THE PRINCIPAL FORM OF SELFISHNESS,—IN ITS NATURE, FORMS, PREVALENCE, ESPECIALLY IN BRITAIN, DISGUISES, TESTS, EVILS, DOOM, AND PLEAS.

SECTION I.

THE NATURE OF COVETOUSNESS.

If selfishness be the prevailing form of sin, covetousness may be regarded as the prevailing form of selfishness. This is strikingly intimated by the apostle Paul, when, describing the "perilous times" of the final apostacy, he represents selfishness as the prolific root of all the evils which will then prevail, and covetousness as its first fruit. "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous."

In passing, therefore, from the preceding outline of selfishness in general, to a consideration of this form of it in particular, we feel that we need not labour to magnify its importance. A very little reflection will suffice to show that, while the other forms of selfishness are partial in their

existence, this is universal; that it lies in our daily path, and surrounds us like the atmosphere; that it exceeds all others in the plausibility of its pretences, and the insidiousness of its operations; that it is, commonly, the last form of selfishness which leaves the heart; and that Christians, who have comparatively escaped from all the others, may still be unconsciously enslaved by this. If there be ground to fear that covetousness "will, in all probability, prove the eternal overthrow of more characters among professing people than any other sin, because it is almost the only crime which can be indulged, and a profession of religion at the same time supported;" and if it be true also, that it operates more than any other sin to hold the church in apparent league with the world, and to defeat its design, and rob it of its honours, as the instrument of the world's conversion, surely nothing more can be necessary to reveal the appalling magnitude of the evil, and justify every attempt that may be made to sound an alarm against it.

Covetousness, denotes the state of a mind from which the Supreme Good has been lost, labouring to replace him by some subordinate form of enjoy-

ment. The determinate direction which this craving takes after *money*, is purely accidental; and arises from the general consent of society, that money shall be the representative of all property; and, as such, the key to all the avenues of worldly enjoyment. But as the existence of this conventional arrangement renders the possession of some amount of property indispensable, the application of the term *covetousness* has come to be confined almost exclusively to *an inordinate and selfish regard for money.*

Our liability to this sin arises, we say, from the perception that "money answereth all things." Riches *in themselves*, indeed, are no evil. Nor is the bare *possession* of them wrong. Nor is the *desire to possess* them sinful, provided that desire exist under certain restrictions. For in almost every stage of civilization money is requisite to procure the conveniences, and even the necessaries of life; to desire it therefore as the means of life, is as innocent as to live. In its higher application it may be made the instrument of great relative usefulness; to seek it, then, as the means of doing good, is not a vice but a virtue. But perceiving that money is so important an agent in society;—

that it not only fences off the wants and woes of poverty, but that like a centre of attraction it can draw to itself every object of worldly desire from the farthest circumference;—the temptation arises of desiring it inordinately; of even desiring it for its own sake; of supposing that the instrument of procuring so much good must itself possess intrinsic excellence. From observing that gold could procure for us whatever it touches, we are tempted to wish, like the fabled king, that whatever we touch might be turned into gold.

But the passion for money exists in various degrees, and exhibits itself in very different aspects. No classification of its multiplied forms, indeed, can, from the nature of things, be rigorously exact. All its branches and modifications run into each other, and are separated by gradations rather than by lines of demarcation. The most obvious and general distinction, perhaps, is that which divides it into the desire of *getting* as contradistinguished from the desire of *keeping* that which is already possessed. But each of these divisions is capable of subdivision. Worldliness, rapacity, and an ever-craving, all-consuming prodigality, may belong to the one; and parsimony, niggardli-

ness, and avarice, to the other. The word *covetousness*, however, is popularly employed as synonymous with each of these terms, and as comprehensive of them all.

SECTION II.

FORMS OF COVETOUSNESS.

By *worldliness*, we mean cupidity in its earliest, most plausible, and most prevailing form; not yet sufficiently developed to be conspicuous to the eye of man, yet sufficiently characteristic and active to incur the prohibition of God. It is that quiet and ordinary operation of the principle which abounds most with excuses; which is seldom questioned even by the majority of professing Christians; which the morality of the world allows, and even commands; which may live, unrebuked, through a whole life, under the decent garb of frugality, and honest industry; and which thus silently works the destruction of multitudes without alarming them.

Rapacity, is covetousness *grasping*; "making

haste to be rich." This is the true "wolf in the breast," ever feeding, and yet ever craving; so ravenous that nothing is like it except death and the grave. It is a passion which compels every other feeling to its aid; the day seems too short for it; success is looked on as a reward and a spur; failure, as a punishment for some relaxation of the passion; the wealth of others seems to reproach it; the poverty of others to warn it. Determined to gratify itself, it overlooks the morality of the means, despises alike the tardiness of industry, and the scruples of integrity, and thinks only of the readiest way to success. Impatient of delay, it scorns to wait for intimations of the divine will, or to watch the movements of providence; and the only restraints which it acknowledges—though many of these it would gladly overleap—are such as our fears of each other have erected into laws, for the express purpose of confining it within bounds.

Parsimony, is covetousness *parting with its life-blood.* It is the frugality of selfishness; the art of parting with as little as possible. Of this disposition it can never be said that it gives, but only that it capitulates; its freest bestowments

have the air of a surrender made with an ill grace.

Avarice, is covetousness *hoarding*. It is the love of money in the abstract, or, for its own sake. Covetousness, in this monstrous form, indeed, is but of rare occurrence. For as money is a compendium of all kinds of worldly good, or so much *condensed world*, it is mostly desired for the sake of the gratifications which it can purchase; it is sought and valued as a kind of concentrated essence which can be diluted at pleasure, and adapted to the taste of every one who possesses it. But avarice is content with the *bare possession* of the essence; stopping short at the means, it is satisfied without the end. By a strange infatuation it looks upon gold as its own end; and, as the ornaments which the Israelites transferred into the hands of Aaron became a god, so gold, in the hand of avarice, becomes an ultimate good; to speak of its utility, or its application to practical purposes, would be almost felt as a profanation. Other vices have a particular view to enjoyment, (falsely so called,) but the very term *miser* is a confession of the misery which attends avarice; for in order to save his gold, the miser robs himself.

"Throws up his interest in both worlds,
First starved in this, then damned in that to come."

He cannot be said to possess wealth; wealth possesses him; or else he possesses it like a fever which burns and consumes him as if molten gold were circulating in his veins. Many vices wear out and are abandoned as age and experience increase, but avarice strikes deeper root as age advances; and, like the solitary tree of the desert, flourishes amidst sterility where nothing else could survive. Other passions are paroxysms, and intermit; but avarice is a distemper which knows no intervals. Other passions have their times of relaxation, but avarice is a tyrant which never suffers its slaves to rest. It is the fabled dragon with its golden fleece, and with lidless and unslumbering eyes it keeps watch and ward night and day.

Prodigality, though directly opposed to avarice or hoarding, is quite compatible with cupidity: and is, indeed, so frequently found in combination with it, that it may be regarded as one of its complex forms. The character which Sallust gives of Catiline, that "he was covetous of other men's wealth, while he squandered his own," is one of very common occurrence. And we notice it here

to show, that although men may occasionally be heard pleading their extravagance to clear themselves from the charge of cupidity, yet it originates in the same cause, produces precisely the same effects, employs the same sinful means of gratification, and incurs the same doom. They must be covetous, that they may be prodigal: one hand must collect, that the other may have wherewith to scatter: covetousness, as the steward to prodigality, must furnish supplies, and is often goaded into rapacity that it may raise them. Thus prodigality strengthens covetousness by keeping it in constant activity, and covetousness strengthens prodigality by slavishly feeding its voracious appetite. Taking possession of the heart, "they divide the man between them," each in turn becoming cause and effect. But prodigal self-indulgence not only produces cupidity, it stands to every benevolent object in the same relation as avarice—it has nothing to give. A system of extravagant expenditure renders benevolence impossible, and keeps a man constantly poor towards God.

SECTION III.

PREVALENCE OF COVETOUSNESS.

To the charge of covetousness, under one or other of these various forms, how large a proportion of mankind, and even of professing Christians, must plead guilty! It is true, indeed, that all these modifications of covetousness cannot co-exist in the same mind, for some of them are destructive of each other: and such is the anxiety of men to escape from the hateful charge entirely, that, finding they are exempt from some of its forms, they flatter themselves that they are guiltless of all. But this delusion, in most cases, only indicates the mournful probability, that the evil, besides having taken up its abode within them, has assumed there a form and a name so plausible, as not merely to

escape detection, but even to secure to itself the credit of a virtue, and the welcome of a friend.

In the eyes of the world, a man may acquire, and through a long life maintain, a character for liberality and spirit, while his heart all the time goeth after his covetousness. His hand, like a channel, may be ever open; and because his income is perpetually flowing through it, the unreflecting world, taken with appearances, hold him up as a pattern of generosity; but the entire current is absorbed by his own selfishness. That others are indirectly benefited by his profusion, does not enter into his calculations; he thinks only of his own gratification. It is true his mode of living may employ others; but he is the idol of the temple, they are only priests in his service; and the prodigality they are empowered to indulge in, is only intended to decorate and do honour to his altar. To maintain an expensive establishment, to carry it high before the world, to settle his children *respectably* in life, to maintain a system of costly self-indulgence,—these are the objects which swallow up all his gains, and keep him in a constant fever of ill-concealed anxiety; filling his heart with envy and covetousness at the

This treats of the question what a man does with his income & the exclusion of what he does for it.

sight of others' prosperity; rendering him loath to part with a fraction of his property to benevolent purposes; making him feel as if every farthing of his money so employed were a diversion of that farthing from the great ends of life; and causing him even to begrudge the hallowed hours of the Sabbath as so much time lost (if, indeed, he allows it to be lost) to the cause of gain. New channels of benevolence may open around him in all directions; but as far as he is concerned, those channels must remain dry, for, like the sands of the desert, he absorbs all the bounty which Heaven rains on him, and still craves for more. What but this is commonly meant by the expression concerning such a man, that "he is living up to his income?" The undisguised interpretation is, that he is engrossing to himself all that benevolence which should be diffused throughout the world; that he is appropriating all that portion of the divine bounty with which he has been intrusted, and which he ought to share with the rest of mankind; and that he is thus disabling himself for all the calls and claims of Christian charity. Alas! that so large a proportion of professing Christians should be, at this moment, systematically incapa-

citating themselves for any thing more than scanty driblets of charity, by their unnecessary expenditure, their extravagant self-indulgence. Where avarice, or hoarding, has slain its thousands, a lavish profusion has slain its tens of thousands; and where the former robs the cause of God of a mite, the latter robs it of a million.

A man may defy a charge of avarice, in the aggravated sense of that term, to be substantiated against him. Indeed, a miser, in the sense in which the character is ordinarily portrayed, is a most unusual prodigy; a monster rarely found but in description. "His life is one long sigh for wealth: he would coin his life-blood into gold: he would sell his soul for gain." Now, the injurious effect of such exaggerated representations is, that men, conscious that their parsimony does not resemble such a character, acquit themselves of the charge of covetousness altogether. Unable to recognise in this disguised and distorted picture of the vice their own likeness, they flatter themselves into a belief of their entire innocence; as if the vice admitted of no degrees, and none were guilty if not as guilty as possible.

But though a man may not merit to be deno-

minated avaricious, he may yet be parsimonious. He may not be a Dead Sea, ever receiving, and never imparting; but yet he may be as unlike the Nile when, overflowing its banks, it leaves a rich deposit on the neighbouring lands. His domestic economy is a system of penuriousness, hateful to servants, visiters, and friends; from which every thing generous has fled; and in which even every thing necessary comes with the air of being begrudged, of existing only by sufferance. In his dealings with others, he seems to act under the impression that mankind have conspired to defraud him, and the consequence is, that his conduct often amounts to a constructive fraud on mankind. He is delighted at the idea of saving; and exults at the acquisition of a little pelf with a joy strikingly disproportionate to its worth. He looks on every thing given to charity, as so much lost, thrown away, and for which there will never be any return. If a benevolent appeal surprise him into an act of unusual liberality, he takes ample revenge by keen self-reproaches, and a determination to steel himself against all such assaults in future. Or else, in his relenting moments, and happier moods, he plumes himself, and looks as compla-

cently on himself for having bestowed a benevolent mite, as if he had performed an act of piety for which nothing less than heaven would be an adequate reward. His soul not only never expands to the warmth of benevolence, but contracts at the bare proposal, the most distant prospect, of sacrifice. His presence in any society met for a charitable purpose would be felt like the vicinity of an iceberg, freezing the atmosphere, and repressing the warm and flowing current of benevolence. The eloquent think it a triumph to have pleaded the cause of mercy before him unabashed; and the benevolent are satisfied if they can only bring away their sacred fire undamped from his presence. He scowls at every benevolent project as romantic, as suited to the meridian of Utopia, to a very different state of things from what is known in this world. He hears of the time when the church will make, and will be necessitated to make, far greater sacrifices than at present, with conscious uneasiness, or resolved incredulity. His life is an economy of petty avarice, constructed on the principle of parting with as little as possible, and getting as much,—a constant warfare against benevolence.

But a person may be free from the charge of parsimony, and yet open to the accusation of worldliness. His covetousness may not be so determined as to distinguish him from the multitude, but yet sufficiently marked to show that his treasure is *not* in heaven. He was born with the world in his heart, and nothing has yet expelled it. He may regularly receive the seed of the gospel, but the soil is pre-occupied; "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and render it unfruitful." He will listen to an ordinary exposition of the vanity of wealth as a matter of course, and will appear to give it his entire assent: and yet, immediately after, he resumes his pursuit of that *vanity* with an avidity which seems increased by the temporary interruption. But let the exposition be more than usually vivid, let it aim at awakening his conviction of the dangers attending wealth, let it set forth the general preferableness of competence to affluence, and it will be found to be disturbing the settled order of his sentiments. A representation of the snares of wealth, is regarded by him as the empty declamation of a man who has been made splenetic by disappointments, or who has

been soured by losses; who has never known the sweets of wealth, or, having known, has lost them, and would gladly recover them again if he could. He never listens to such representations as—that unsanctified riches are only the means of purchasing disappointment; that the possessor suffers, rather than enjoys them; that his wants multiply faster than his means—without an inward smile of scepticism, a conscious feeling of incredulity; a feeling which, if put into words, would express itself thus, "O, if I might be but made rich, I would make myself happy. Tell me not of dangers: cheerfully would I risk them all, only bless me with wealth." And his life is arranged, and spent, in strict accordance with this confession. In his vocabulary, wealth, means *happiness—the chief good.* And in his reading of the holy Scripture, the declaration of our Lord is reversed, as if he had said—A man's life consisteth in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

And this representation, be it observed, applies to the man whose ideas of wealth are limited to a few hundreds, as much as to him whose wishes aspire to hundreds of thousands. The poor man is apt to imagine that covetousness is a subject in

which he has no interest—that it is a sin peculiar to the rich. It is true, indeed, that he may not *plan* for riches, because he may not be able to plan much for any thing; calculation is out of his sphere; it requires too much thought for him. And it is true, also, that the prosperous are more liable to indulge cupidity than the poor; for if it cannot be said with confidence that poverty starves the propensity, it may certainly be affirmed that prosperity feeds it; often awakening it at first from its dormant state, and turning every subsequent instance of gain into a meal to gratify its voracious appetite.

But there is no sphere so humble and contracted as to secure a man against its intrusion. Like a certain class of plants, it seems only to ask for room, though it should be on a rock, and for the common air, in order to thrive. The man who flatters himself that he has "retired from the world," may still be carrying this abridgment of the world's influences about with him in his heart. And, by artfully soliciting the poor man under the disguise of industry, of frugality, or of providing for his family, it may have yoked him as a captive to its car, though he may appear to be only keep-

ing poverty at bay. He need not plunge into the ocean in order to drown himself—a very shallow stream will suffice, if he chooses to lie prostrate in it; and the desire of the smallest gain, if his heart be immersed in the pursuit, will as certainly "drown him in perdition," as if the object of his cupidity were the wealth of a Crœsus. He takes his character, and incurs his danger, not from the magnitude of his object, but from the unceasing and undivided manner in which he pursues it. Though his worldliness may be quiet and equable in its operation, yet, like an ever-flowing stream, it gradually wears his whole soul into one channel, which drains off his thoughts and affections from higher ground, and carries them all in a steady current in that single direction; while his occasional impressions of a religious nature only ripple its surface for a moment, and vanish, without in the least retarding its onward course.

But to specify all the forms of covetousness, and to trace it in all its modifications, is impossible. Capable of combining with all motives, and penetrating all actions, in its symptoms or its practice it is every where to be found. It acknowledges no conqueror but the grace of God, and owns no

limit but that of the world. Our great epic poet, with equal sublimity and propriety, gives to it an existence even beyond this world. Recording the history of Mammon—the Scripture personification of cupidity—he describes him as

> "the least erected spirit that fell
> From heaven; for even in heaven his looks and thoughts
> Were always downward bent; admiring more
> The riches of heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
> Than aught divine or holy else, enjoyed
> In vision beatific."

The moral of which is, that covetousness is one of the eldest-born of sin, and a prime leader in the satanic empire of evil; that no nature is too lofty, no place too sacred, for its presence: that, being a universal passion, no enterprise is too daring for it to attempt, no sphere too extended for its range.

One of the great objects of the personal ministry of our Lord himself, appears to have been to make us aware of the universality of this passion, and to save us from it. Sin having expelled the love of God from the heart, he saw that the love of the world had rushed in to fill up the vacuum; that the desire of riches, as an abstract of all other worldly desires, has become a universal passion,

in which all other appetites and passions concur, since it is the readiest means to gratify them all. To the eye of an ordinary observer, the generation of that day appeared to be only laudably employed in their respective avocations; but, penetrating the thin disguises of custom, he beheld the world converted into a mart in which every thing was exposed for sale. To a common observer, the confused pursuits and complicated passions of mankind might have presented an aspect of ever-shifting forms, as incapable of classification as the waves of the sea; but to his comprehensive view there appeared but two great classes, in which all minor distinctions were merged—the servants of God, and the servants of Mammon. To his unerring and omniscient glance, the whole world appeared to be engrossed in a laborious experiment to effect a compromise between these two claimants; but against such an accommodation he enters his divine protest; affirming, with the solemnity and confidence of one who knew that though the experiment had been made and repeated in every form and in every age, it had failed as often as it had been made, and will prove eternally impracticable, "Ye cannot serve God

and mammon." To an ordinary observer, the charge of covetousness could only be alleged against a few individuals: but he tracked it through the most unsuspected windings, laid open some of its most concealed operations, and showed that, like the elemental fire, it is not only present where it is grossly visible, but that it is all-pervading, and co-extensive with human depravity.

Entering the mart of the busy world, where nothing is heard but the monotonous hum of the traders in vanity, he lifts up his voice like the trump of God, and seeks to break the spell which infatuates them, while he exclaims, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Proceeding to the mansion of Dives, he shows selfishness there, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day,—a spectacle at which the multitude stands in earnest and admiring gaze, as if it drew in happiness at the sight,—but Lazarus unheeded perishes at the gate. Approaching the house of prosperity, he bids us listen to the soliloquy of its worldly inhabitant, "I will pull down my barns and will build greater"—a resolution which the

world applauds—"And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" —a prospect of happiness which the world envies: but God is not in all his thoughts; besides his wealth, he knows no god. Passing into the circle of devotion, he pointed out the principle of covetousness there, mingling in the worship of God, choking the word, and rendering it unfruitful. Penetrating the heart, he unveiled its hateful presence there, as the leaven of hypocrisy, and the seed of theft.

And can we wonder at the energy and frequency with which he denounced it, when we remember how frequently it came into direct personal contact with himself, defeating his tenderest solicitudes, and robbing him of souls he yearned to save? It was covetousness which rendered unfruitful so large a proportion of that heavenly seed which he had come to sow. It was this which begrudged him the anointing for his burial. It was this which robbed his kingdom of a subject, just at the moment when "the young man" appeared to be about to fall into his train; and which drew from him the affecting exclamation,

"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!" This it was which left the gospel feast so thinly attended, and which sent excuses instead of guests. His audience commonly consisted of "the Pharisees who were covetous, and derided him." Wherever he looked, he beheld the principle in active, manifold, ruinous operation; "devouring widows' houses," drinking orphans' tears, luxuriating in the spoils of defenceless childhood and innocence. Did he turn from this sickening spectacle, and seek relief in the temple? there he beheld nothing but a den of thieves. Mammon was there enshrined; the solemn passover itself turned into gain; the priests trafficking in the blood of human souls. Like their forefathers, "from the least of them even to the greatest of them, every one was given to covetousness."

But the last triumph of covetousness remained yet to be achieved. To have sold the temple for money would have been an act of daring impiety; to make it the place of merchandise was, perhaps, still worse, it was adding sacrilege to impiety. Only one deed more remained to be perpetrated, and covetousness might then rest satisfied. There

was one greater than the temple. God so loved the world that he had sent his only begotten Son to redeem it—might not *he* be sold? Covetousness, in the person of Judas, looked on him, eyed him askance, and went to the traffickers in blood, and, for the charm of thirty pieces of silver, betrayed him,—a type of the manner in which the cause of mercy would be betrayed in every succeeding age. Yes, in the conduct of Judas, the incarnation of cupidity, towards Jesus Christ, the incarnation of benevolence, we may behold an intimation of the quarter from which, in all succeeding times, the greatest danger would arise to the cause of Christ. The scene of the Saviour's betrayal for money was an affecting rehearsal, a prophetic warning, of the treatment which his gospel might expect to the end of the world.

And have events falsified the prediction? Let the history of the corruptions of Christianity testify. The spirit of gain deserted the Jewish temple, only to take up its abode in the Christian church. Having sold the Saviour to the cross, it proceeded, in a sense, to sell the cross itself. We allude not to the venality of selling "the wood of the true cross,"—*that* was only a diminution of

that accursed lust of gain which "thought the gift of God might be purchased with money," and which literally placed the great blessings of the cross at sale. Gradually, every thing became a source of gain. Not a single innovation, or rite, was introduced, which had not a relation to gain. Nations were laid under tribute. Every shrine had its gifts; every confession its cost; every prayer its charge; every benediction its price. Dispensation from duty, and indulgence in sin, were both attainable at the sum set down. Liberation from hell, and admission into heaven, were both subject to money. And not content with following its victims into the invisible state, Covetousness even there created a third world, for the purpose of assessing its tortured inhabitants. Thus the religion whose blessings were intended to be without money and without price, became the tax and burden of the world; a proverb for extortion and rapine; till the wealth which the church had drained from a thousand states, "turned to poison in its bosom," and mankind arose to cast it from them as a bloated corruption and a curse.

The truth is, covetousness is native to our fallen

nature; and, unless religion vanquish it, in its indiscriminate ravages, it will vanquish religion. Other forms of selfishness are partial in their operation, being either confined to a party, or, at most, to an order of character; but covetousness is the sin of humanity; it is the name of a disease which knows no distinction of class or party—the epidemic malady of our race.

Gold is the only power which receives universal homage. It is worshipped in all lands without a single temple, and by all classes without a single hypocrite: and often has it been able to boast of having armies for its priesthood, and hecatombs of human victims for its sacrifices. Where war has slain its thousands, gain has slaughtered its millions; for while the former operates only with the local and fitful terrors of an earthquake, the destructive influence of the latter is universal and unceasing. Indeed war itself—what has it often been but the art of gain practised on the largest scale? the covetousness of a nation resolved on gain, impatient of delay, and leading on its subjects to deeds of rapine and blood? Its history, is the history of slavery and oppression in all ages. For centuries, Africa—one quarter of the globe—

has been set apart to supply the monster with victims—thousands at a meal. And, at this moment, what a populous and gigantic empire can it boast! the mine, with its unnatural drudgery; the manufactory, with its swarms of squalid misery; the plantation, with its imbruted gangs; and the market and the exchange, with their furrowed and care-worn countenances,—these are only specimens of its more menial offices and subjects. Titles and honours are among its rewards, and thrones at its disposal. Among its counsellors are kings, and many of the great and mighty of the earth enrolled among its subjects. Where are the waters not ploughed by its navies? What imperial element is not yoked to its car? Philosophy itself has become a mercenary in its pay; and science, a votary at its shrine, brings all its noblest discoveries, as offerings, to its feet. What part of the globe's surface is not rapidly yielding up its last stores of hidden treasure to the spirit of gain? or retains more than a few miles of unexplored and unvanquished territory? Scorning the childish dream of the philosopher's stone, it aspires to turn the globe itself into gold.

SECTION IV.

THE PRESENT PREDOMINANCE OF COVETOUSNESS IN BRITAIN.

THIS is a subject in which the Christians of Britain have more than an ordinary interest. For, though no part of the world is exempt from the influence of covetousness, a commercial nation, like Britain, is more liable to its debasement than any other. Were it not indigenous to the human heart, *here* it would surely have been born; for here are assembled all the fermenting elements, favourable to its spontaneous generation: or, were it to be driven from every other land, here it would find sanctuary in a thousand places open to receive it. Not only does it *exist* among us, it is honoured, worshipped, deified. Alas! it has—without a figure—its priests; its appropriate

temples—earthly "hells;" its ceremonial; its ever-burning fires, fed with precious things which ought to be offered as incense to God; and, for its sacrifices, immortal souls.

Every nation has its idol: in some countries that idol is pleasure; in others, glory; in others, liberty; but the name of our idol is Mammon. The shrines of the others, indeed, are not neglected, but it must be conceded that money is the mightiest of all our idol-gods.

And not only does this fact distinguish us from most other nations, it distinguishes our present from our former selves—it is the brand-mark of the present age. For, if it be true, that each successive age has its representative; that it beholds itself reflected in some leading school, and impresses its image on the philosophy of the day, where shall we look for the image of the existing age but in our systems of political economy? "Men who would formerly have devoted their lives to metaphysical and moral research, are now given up to a more *material* study"—to the theory of rents, and the philosophy of the mart. Morality itself is allowed to employ no standard but that of utility; to enforce her requirements by no plea

but expediency, a consideration of profit and loss. And even the science of metaphysics is wavering, if it has not actually pronounced, in favour of a materialism which would subject the great mysteries of humanity to mathematical admeasurement, and chemical analysis. Mammon is marching through the land in triumph; and, it is to be feared, that a large majority of all classes have devoted and degraded themselves to the office of his train-bearers.

Statements like these may startle the reader who now reflects on the subject for the first time. But let him be assured that, "as the first impression which the foreigner receives on entering England is that of the evidence of wealth, so the first thing which strikes an inquirer into our social system is the absorbing respect in which wealth is held. The root of all our laws is to be found in the sentiment of property;" and this sentiment, right in itself, has, by excess, infected with an all-pervading taint our politics, our systems of education, the distribution of honours, the popular notions—nay, it has penetrated our language, and even intruded into the sacred enclosures of religion. This is a truth obvious, not merely to the

foreigner to whom it is a comparative novelty, the taint is acknowledged and deplored even by those who have become acclimated and inured to it. Not merely does the *divine* protest against it;* the man of the world joins him; for it is felt to be a common cause. The legislator complains that governments are getting to be little better than political establishments to furnish facilities for the accumulation of wealth. The philanthropist complains that generous motives are lost sight of in the prevailing desire of gain; so that he who evinces a disposition to disinterested benevolence is either distrusted as a hypocrite, or derided as a fool. The moralist complains that "commerce has kindled in the nation a universal emulation for wealth, and that money receives all the honours which are the proper right of knowledge and virtue." The candidate for worldly advancement and honour protests against the arrangement which makes promotion a matter of purchase, thus dis-

* *His* complaint might be thought *professional*. In this section, therefore, the writer has had recourse to authorities which some may consider of *greater weight*. His quotations are derived principally from Coleridge's Lay Sermons, Bulwer's England and the English, and from the two leading Reviews.

paraging and discouraging all worth save that of wealth. The poet laments "that the world is too much with us;" that "all things are sold;" that every thing is made a marketable commodity, and "labelled with its price." The student of mental and moral philosophy laments that his favourite "sciences are falling into decay, while the physical are engrossing, every day, more respect and attention;" that the "worship of the beautiful and good has given place to a calculation of the profitable;" that "every work which can be made use of to immediate profit, every work which falls in with the desire of acquiring wealth suddenly, is sure of an appropriate circulation;" that we have been led to "estimate the worth of all pursuits and attainments by their marketable value."

To the same unhallowed spirit of gain, is to be traced that fierce "competition," of which the labourer, the artisan, the dealer, the manufacturer, and even the members of all the liberal professions, alike complain. That competition, under certain limits, is necessary to the activity and healthy condition of the social economy, is not to be denied. But when it rises to a struggle in which neither time nor strength is left for

higher pursuits; in which every new competitor is looked on in the light of an enemy; in which every personal exertion, and practicable retrenchment, in the mode of conducting business, do but barely leave a subsistence,—there must be something essentially wrong in our ruling spirit, or social constitution. True, the fact that the evil exists may palliate the conduct of the Christian, who, in mere self-defence, and without his own seeking, finds himself compelled by circumstances to engage in the rivalry and turmoil. Such a man is an object, not of blame, but of pity. But how small the number of those who are not actually augmenting the evil, either by a sumptuous style of living, which absorbs the entire profits of business as fast as they accrue, and which even anticipates them; or else by a morbid and exorbitant craving after something new, by which the ingenuity and application of men of business are kept constantly taxed, and competition is almost converted into hostility! Our present concern, however, is not with the cause, but with the fact. And on all hands it is admitted, that the way in which business is now

conducted, involves all the risk, uncertainty, and unnatural excitement of a game of chance.

Nor is the strife of fashion less apparent than the struggle of business. Each class of the community, in succession, is pressing on that which is immediately before it. Many of those engaged in the rivalry are supporting themselves by temporary expedients; concealing their real poverty by occasional extravagance and display. Take the following description of the fact, from an eminent Christian moralist, whose position in society enabled him to judge correctly, and on a large scale:—"Others, ... a numerous class in our days, attach themselves to the pomps and vanities of life. Magnificent houses, grand equipages, numerous retinues, splendid entertainments, high and fashionable connexions, appear to constitute, in their estimation, the supreme happiness of life. Persons to whose rank and station these indulgences most properly belong, often are the most indifferent to them. Undue solicitude about them is more visible in persons of inferior conditions and smaller fortunes; in whom it is detected by the studious contrivances of a misapplied ingenuity, to reconcile parade with

economy, and to glitter at a cheap rate. There is an evident effort and struggle to excel in the particulars here in question; a manifest wish to rival superiors, to outstrip equals, and to dazzle inferiors."* The truth of this picture, it is to be feared, has been daily increasing ever since it was drawn.

A spirit of extravagance and display naturally seeks for resources in daring pecuniary speculations. Industry is too slow and plodding for it. Accordingly, this is the age of reckless adventure. The spirit of the lottery is still upon us. "Sink or swim," is the motto of numbers who are ready to stake their fortune on a speculation; and evil indeed must be that project, and perilous in the extreme must be that scheme, which they would hesitate to adopt, if it held out the remotest prospect of gain.

The writer is quite aware, and free to admit, that we are, from circumstances—and long may we be—an active, industrious, trading people. Much of our distinctive greatness as a nation is owing to this fact. Nor is he insensible to the numerous claims of the present age to be called

* Wilberforce on Practical Christianity.

the age of benevolence. Both these facts, however, he regards as quite compatible with his present allegations. For the truth appears to be, that, much as the benevolence of the age has increased, the spirit of trade has increased still more; that it has far outstript the spirit of benevolence; so that, while the spirit of benevolence has increased *absolutely*, yet *relatively* it may be said to have declined, to have lost ground to the spirit of trade, and to be tainted and oppressed by its influence. How large a proportion of what is cast into the Christian treasury must be regarded merely as a kind of quit-rent paid to the cause of benevolence by the spirit of trade, that it might be left free to devote itself to the absorbing claims of the world. How small a proportion of it is subtracted from the vanities and indulgences of life; how very little of it results from a settled plan of benevolence, or from that self-denial, without which, on Christian principles, there is no benevolence. Never, perhaps, was self-denial a rarer virtue than in the present age.

Again: what is the testimony of those in our most popular schools who educate our youth?—

that "there is a prevailing indifference to that class of sciences, the knowledge of which is not profitable to the possessor in a pecuniary point of view,"—that the only learning in request is that which teaches the art of making money. The man of ancestral rank complains, that even respect for birth is yielding to the mercenary claim of riches. Such is the all-transforming power of cupidity, that business the most oppressive is pursued with all the zest of an amusement, while amusement, intended to be a discharge from business, is laboriously cultivated by thousands as a soil for profitable speculation and golden fruit. Perhaps the greatest triumph which the lust of lucre has achieved, next to its presence in the temple of God, is the effectual manner in which it has converted the principal amusements of the nation into so vast and complicated a system of gambling, that, to master it, demands all the studious application of a profound science. Looking at the universal influence which wealth has obtained over every institution, and every grade of the social system, what more is wanting to induce the *many* to believe, as sober truth, the ironical definition of the satirist, that "Worth

means *wealth* — and wisdom, *the art of acquiring it?*

"Whatever men are taught highly to respect, gradually acquires the rank of a virtue." Well, therefore, has it been said, by a master of philosophy, that "the honours of a state, direct the esteem of a people; and that according to the esteem of a people, is the *general* direction of mental energy and genius." The consequence of affixing the highest worldly rewards to wealth, is, that to be rich is accounted a merit, and to be poor an offence. Nor is this the worst: a false standard of morality is thus created, by which it is made of less consequence to be wise and virtuous, than to be rich.

The appalling degree to which such a standard has obtained among us, may be inferred from the manner in which it has imprinted itself on our language. It is true, that many of the terms and phrases alluded to, may sometimes be employed with an exclusive reference to property, and quite irrespective of moral worth. They are, however, idioms of the language, and as such would soon give rise to the debasing associations in question, even if those associations did not

exist before. But the tones in which they are commonly uttered, and the emotions of admiration or contempt with which they are accompanied, abundantly testify that such associations already exist. Justly has a foreign writer observed, for instance, that "the supreme influence of wealth, in this country, may be judged of by the simple phrase, that a man is said to be *worth so much*," —worth just so much as his money amounts to, and no more. "*Poor* creature!" is an exclamation as frequently uttered to express contempt as pity, and may indicate that the object of it unites in himself all kinds of wretchedness, and many degrees of guilt. How constantly are individuals and families pronounced *respectable*—that is the favourite pass-word into society—when, if reference were had to their character, to any thing but their wealth, they would be found entitled to any thing but respect. What is ordinarily understood by *good society?* Certainly the exclusion of nothing *bad* but poverty: it may exclude every one of the virtues, provided there be a sufficiency of wealth. And when we speak of making a meeting or a society *select*, who thinks of employing any other process, if

money be the means of admission, than that of raising the price, and thus erecting a test of wealth? We find ourselves in a world where a thousand conflicting objects propose themselves to our attention, each claiming to deserve our supreme regard; but who thinks of disturbing the ratified decision of generations, that, of all these objects, money is *the main chance?* Whatever attainments a man may be making in other respects, yet, as if wealth were the only prize worth contending for in the race of life, he only is said to be *getting on in the world* who is increasing his property. The term *gain* is not applied to knowledge, virtue, or happiness; it is reserved solely to mark pecuniary acquisitions; it is synonymous with gold, as if nothing but gold were gain, and every thing else were comparative loss. And the man whose gains are known to be rapidly increasing, is not only spoken of by the multitude, under their breath, with marked veneration and awe, but as if he more nearly approached the creative power than any other human being, he is said to be *making money;*—and having said that, eulogy is exhausted, he is considered to be crowned with praise.

Could we ascertain the entire amount of national excitement and emotion experienced in the course of a year, and could we then distribute it into classes, assigning each respectively to its own exciting cause, who can for a moment doubt that the amount of excitement arising from the influence and operation of money, direct and indirect, would not only exceed that of either of the others, separately considered, but would go near to surpass them all together? And when it is remembered that this cause is always in operation; that it has acquired a character of permanence; that our life is spent under the reign of wealth; how can it be otherwise than that we should become its subjects, if not even its slaves? When, year after year, the assembled wisdom of the nation is employed for months, discussing, in the hearing of the nation, questions of cost and finance, trying the merit of every proposition by a standard of profit and loss, and thus virtually converting the throne of legislation into *a table of exchange*, it can only follow, that the same standard will be generally adopted in private life to try individual questions. If the body politic be so constituted that

the Exchange is its heart, then every particular pulse in the community will aim to find its health, by beating in unison with it.

Thus the spirit of gain, which in most countries is only one power amongst many, may here be said to be tutelary and supreme; and the love of money, from being an occasional pursuit, becomes, in innumerable instances, a rooted and prevailing passion. Nor is it possible for piety itself to escape the infection. To live here, is to live in the Temple of Mammon; and it is impossible to see the god worshipped daily, to behold the reverence of the multitude, to stand in the presence of the idol, without catching the contagion of awe, and yielding to the sorcery of wealth.

Are our *religious assemblies* exempt from the debasing influence? "My brethren," saith the apostle James, "have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect unto him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place: and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or

sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" The apostle is deprecating that homage to wealth which implies that it is honourable for its own sake alone, and that poverty is disgraceful, however borne; a homage which, while it is sinful every where, cannot be practised in the sanctuary without offering peculiar insult to the throne of God. But did not the apostle draw this picture prophetically of the present day? Could he now witness, says Scott in his comment on this scripture, what takes place generally in this matter, and give his opinion of it, would he not repeat the censure, that we are influenced by corrupt reasonings and erroneous calculations? and utter it in words even more severe? And would he not find, it may be added, that the influence of wealth has penetrated deeper still? that it not only sits in the presence of God while poverty stands, but that it often rules there while poverty serves; that in that sacred inclosure, where men should take rank only by superiority of spiritual excellence, wealth, in many instances, lords it over character, and reigns with a sway as undisputed as it exercises in the world?

Has *the management of our benevolent societies* escaped the prevailing evil? The guardians of the funds of benevolence, indeed, cannot too carefully protect them from exorbitant charges, and a wasteful expenditure; but at the same time, they are not, under the plea of economy, to refuse to the tradesman a remunerating profit. Yet tradesmen are occasionally heard to complain that such is the fact; that the grinding system of some of our religious committees leaves them to do business for nothing. Besides which, is there not, in many instances, too much reliance placed on the efficacy of money for the accomplishment of religious objects? too much deference paid to wealth in the selection of chairmen, officers, and members? too evident a disposition to estimate the prosperity of an institution by the amount of its funds? too much of a pecuniary rivalry with kindred institutions; and too little delicacy about the means employed to swell the funds, provided only the increase take place? Is it not equally true of the institution that "maketh haste to be rich," as of the man, that it "cannot be innocent?"

Are our *public meetings of benevolence* free from the taint? Is there nothing questionable in the

way in which money is raised on those occasions? nothing of a worldly mechanism for raising benevolence to the giving point? nothing of the anxiety of a pecuniary adventure felt, by those most deeply interested, at the commencement of a meeting? and, as the pecuniary experiment proceeds, is not that anxiety increased as to how the speculation will succeed? Are there not occasions when our platforms exhibit a scene too much resembling a *bidding* for notice?—The writer feels that he is treading on delicate ground; nor has he advanced thus far on it without trembling. He is fully aware that *many* of those scenes to which he alludes have originated spontaneously, unexpectedly, and from pure Christian impulse:—would that the number of such were increased! He does not forget that some of the agents of benevolence who are most active in promoting a repetition of such scenes, are among the excellent of the earth. He bears in mind, too, that among those whose names are *proclaimed* as donors on such occasions, are some whom it is a privilege to know; men who give privately as well as publicly; whose ordinary charity is single-handed. And he feels convinced that the ruling motive

of all, is, to enlarge the sphere of Christian beneficence to the glory of the grace of God. Nor can he be insensible to the unkind construction to which these remarks, however humbly submitted, are liable to expose him; or to the avidity with which the captious and the covetous will seize and turn them to their own unhallowed account; or to the force of the plea, that the best things are open to abuse, and that it is easy to raise objections against the purest methods and means of benevolence. Still, however, he feels himself justified in respectfully submitting to the Christian consideration of those most deeply concerned in the subject, whether our anxiety for the attainment of the glorious *end*, has left us sufficiently jealous for the purity of the means; whether some of these means do not call for reconsideration; whether they do not too directly appeal to motives which the gospel discountenances and disowns; and whether they rely sufficiently on the power of Christian appeal to Christian principle;—whether, in fine, the mechanical spirit of the age is not beginning to influence the supply of our funds, to the injury of the spirit of genuine benevolence.

But does not the very fact, that novel and questionable means are sometimes resorted to for the purpose of replenishing the funds of benevolence, imply that ordinary and approved methods had failed to answer that end? in other words, that *the charge of covetousness lies against the professors of the gospel generally?* But, besides this presumptive evidence of the charge, it is easy to substantiate it by two direct proofs—the first, derived from their conduct in the world; and the second, from their conduct in the church. Who has not heard of the morality of trade as differing materially from the standard morality of the gospel? Yet how small the number of Christian professors who perceive the guilt of this moral solecism! How few who do not easily fall in, for the sake of pecuniary advantage, with the most approved worldly methods of increasing their profits! Blinded by the love of gain, and justifying themselves on the ground of custom and self-defence, the sense of right is overruled, and conscience itself becomes a victim on the altar of Mammon. The other proof of the covetousness of the church may be deduced from the very fact, that its contributions to the cause of mercy are

annually increasing. For, it proves, either that, having reached the standard mark of liberality, we are now yearly exceeding it, or else that, with slow and laborious steps, we are only as yet advancing towards it. If the latter—does not the increase of every present year cast a reproach back on the comparative parsimony of every past year? Will not the augmented liberality of next year reproach the niggardliness of this?

SECTION V.

THE DISGUISES OF COVETOUSNESS.

EASY as it is, however, to demonstrate the prevalence of covetousness,—to convict the individual conscience of the evil, to bring home the charge personally so as to produce self-accusation, is one of the last efforts in which we hope for success. Men think not of covetousness, and of themselves, at the same time. He who can decide, with equal facility and precision, the exact point at which cupidity begins in another, no sooner finds the same test about to be applied to himself than he discovers a number of exceptions, which render the standard totally inapplicable. It was remarked by St. Francis de Sales, who was greatly resorted to in his day as a confessor, that *none confess the sin of covetousness.* And he who "knew what was in

man," sought to alarm our vigilance, by saying of this sin, what he said so emphatically of no other, "Take heed, and beware of it."

It is true of every passion, that it has an established method of justifying itself; but of covetousness it may be said, that all the passions awake to justify *it;* they all espouse its cause, and draw in its defence, for it panders to them all; "Money answereth all ends."

The very prevalence of the evil forms its most powerful protection and plea; for "the multitude never blush." We might have supposed that its prevalence would have facilitated its detection and exposure in individual cases; but owing to its very prevalence it is that so few are conscious of it. We keep each other in countenance. Having been born in the climate, we are not aware of any thing pernicious in it. The guilt of this, as of every other sin, is measured by a graduated scale; and as all around us indulge in it up to a certain point of the scale, it is only from *that* point we allow covetousness begins; we begin to reckon guilt only from that point. Indignation is reserved till that point is passed, and the passion has become monstrous and ex-

treme. Because we are not a community of Trumans, Elwes, and Dancers, we exchange looks of congratulation, and flatter ourselves that we are innocent. The very resentment which we let loose on such personifications of the vice, seems to discharge us from all suspicion, and to grant us a fresh dispensation to indulge in the quiet of ordinary covetousness. Yet, often, it is to be feared, that very resentment is the mere offspring of jealousy; like the anger awakened in a community of the dishonest, at finding that one of their number has violated the rules of the body, by secreting more than his *share* of booty.

But that which constitutes the strength of covetousness, is, its power to assume the appearance of virtue; like ancient armour, it is at once protection and disguise. "No advocate will venture to defend it under its own proper character. Avarice takes the license used by other felons, and, by the adoption of an *alias*, escapes the reprobation attached to its own name."* In the vocabulary of covetousness, worldliness means *industry;* though it is obvious to every Christian

* Mrs. More.

observer, that the pretended industry of many a religious professor is the destruction of his piety, and will eventually form the ground of his condemnation. *Idleness* is his pretended aversion. His time, his strength, his solicitudes, are all drained off in the service of mammon; while nothing is left for religion but a faint sigh, a hurried heartless prayer, and an occasional struggle so impotent as to invite defeat.

"But Providence," he pleads, "has actually filled his hands with business, without his seeking; and would it not be ungrateful to lose it by neglect?" But have you never heard, we might reply, that God sometimes tries his people, to see whether they will keep his commandments or not? and may he not be now proving how far the verdure of your piety can resist the exhaling and scorching sun of prosperity? Besides, is it supposable that God intended you to interpret his grant of worldly prosperity into a discharge from his service, and a commission in the service of mammon? And, more than all, significantly as you may think his providence invites you to labour for the bread that perisheth, does not his gospel, his Son, your Lord and Re-

deemer, call you a thousand-fold more emphatically to labour for the meat which endureth unto eternal life? You *may* be misinterpreting the voice of his providence, the voice of his gospel you *cannot* misunderstand; it is distinct, imperative, and incessant; urging you daily to "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."

Another individual is a slave to parsimony; but he is quite insensible to it, for the temptation solicits him under the disguise of frugality. *Waste* is his abhorrence; and he knows no refuge from it but in the opposite extreme. Every new instance of impoverished prodigality is received by him as a warning from Providence to be careful. His creed is made up of all the accredited maxims and world-honoured proverbs in favour of covetousness, the authority of which he never questions, and the dexterous application of which fortifies his mind like an antidote against all the contagious attacks of charity. And thus, though he lives in a world supported by bounty, and hopes, perhaps, to be saved at last *by grace*, he gives only when shame will not allow him to refuse, and grudges the little which he gives.

The aim of another is evidently the accumu-

lation of wealth; but the explanation which he gives to himself of his conduct, is, that he desires simply to provide for the future. *Want* is his dread. And though, in his aim to avoid this evil, he may not distinctly propose to himself to become rich, yet what else *can* result from his constantly amassing? His interpretation of competence, if candidly avowed, is *affluence;* a dispensation from labour for himself and family to the end of time, a discharge from future dependence on Providence, a perpetuity of ease and sloth. Till he has succeeded in reaching that enviable state, his mind is full of foreboding; he can take no thought *except* for the morrow. As if Providence had vacated its throne, and deserted its charge, he takes on himself all the cares and burdens belonging to his state. And laden with these, he is totally disqualified for every holy duty and Christian enterprise which would take him a single step out of his way to competence. And often is he to be seen providing for the infirmities of age long after these infirmities have overtaken him, and labouring to acquire a competence up to the moment when a competence for him means only the expenses of his funeral.

In the instance of a person who has attained to competence, covetousness often seeks to escape detection under the name of contentment. He fancies that he is completely vindicated from the charge of cupidity, by saying, "I am quite content with what I have." But so also was that minion of wealth whom our Lord introduces with the solemn warning, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." His contentment is only covetousness reposing self-complacently from its toils, resting on its well-filled bags, and saying, "Soul, take thine ease." Let an agent of charity approach him with outstretched and imploring hand, and, as if touched by Ithuriel's spear, he will forthwith start into his proper character, and demonstrate that his contentment depends on his keeping his property entire; at least, that he is not *content* to give.

And another, not only most confidently acquits himself of all suspicion of selfishness, but even appropriates the credit of being benevolent, on the ground of his *natural sensibility*. A spectacle of suffering harrows up his soul; and therefore "he passes by on the other side." An object of destitution afflicts his too delicate sympathies;

and, therefore, he closes his door against it, saying, "Depart in peace, be thou warmed and filled;" and leaves it in its destitution to perish. And thus, by belonging to the school of Rousseau or of Sterne, he gives himself the credit of belonging to the school of Christ; by paying the tax of a sigh to wretchedness, he escapes the levy of a heavier tribute, and even purchases a character for the tenderest susceptibility. But sensibility is not benevolence; by wasting itself on trifles, it may render us slaves to selfishness, and unfit us for every thing but *self*-commiseration.

Covetousness will sometimes indulge itself under the pretence of preparing to retire from the cares and turmoil of active life. The propriety of an early retirement from business must depend, of course, on circumstances. But how often does the covetousness which wears this mask, retain her slave in her service even to hoary hairs, putting him off from time to time with delusive promises of approaching emancipation. Or else, he retires to spend, in slothful and selfish privacy, that which he had accumulated by years of parsimony. Or else, by mingling readily in scenes of gaiety and amusement, he shows that his

worldly aversions related, not to the world of pleasure, but only to the world of business. Instead of fixing his abode where his pecuniary resources and Christian activity might have rendered him an extensive blessing, he consults only his own gratification, establishes himself at a distance, it may be, from "the place of the altar," and, in a regular round of habitual indulgence, lives and dies an unfaithful steward, a *sober* sensualist, a curse rather than a blessing.

Sometimes covetousness is heard enlarging complacently on the necessity, and even piety, of providing for children. And here, be it remembered, we are not considering what *parental duty* may dictate on this subject, but only what covetousness often does under its borrowed name. Many a parent gratifies his love for money, while pretending a love for his children. The facility, too, with which he quotes certain passages of Scripture to defend the course he is pursuing, shows how acceptable to his numerous class an argument would be in favour of hoarding, since these few perverted sentences, which only *seem* to sanction it, are his favourite and most familiar texts. Of these, his chosen stronghold, perhaps,

is the declaration of the apostle, "He that provideth not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." The sacred writer, in giving directions relative to the maintenance of widows, distinguishes between such as the church should relieve, and such as should be supported by their own relatives. And concerning the latter he makes the statement in question. Whence it follows, first, that the provision contemplated by the apostle is not a laying up beforehand for future contingencies, but a present supply of present necessities, a simple maintenance of needy relatives from day to day. And, secondly, that, instead of countenancing parents in the accumulation of great fortunes for their children, he is speaking of the maintenance which children, if able, should afford to their aged and destitute parents. With the subject of *providing for families*, therefore, the text in question has nothing to do. Rightly interpreted, we see that it enjoins, not *accumulating*, but *giving*. How humiliating is the only explanation which can be given of the general perversion of this scripture, and of the pertinacity with which that perversion is retained.

Let the Christian parent compare the merits of a useful education, and a qualification for business or a profession, with the merits of that state of so-called independence in which he is toiling to place his family; and let him call in the aid of Scripture and of prayer that he may conduct the comparison aright, and we will not fear for the result. Let him look around his neighbourhood, and institute a comparison, if he can, between the apparent character and happiness of the six nearest individuals who have been left dependent, under God, on their own exertions for respectability and support, and the six who have been left independent of personal exertion, indeed, but pitiably dependent on wealth alone for happiness, and let him say which state is preferable for virtue and enjoyment. Let him say, what is to be thought of the consistency of a Christian parent who, with our Lord's representation of the danger of riches ringing in his ears, goes on scheming and labouring, to leave his children rich in the element of destruction; toiling, to place them in a condition in which, he admits, it is all but impossible that they should be saved. Let him ask himself, whether such an one be not acting over

again, on a smaller scale, the part of the Tempter, when he brought the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them to the Saviour's feet? Let him remember, not only that he is to leave his children behind him in a world where wealth is thought to be every thing, but that he is to meet them again in a world where it will be nothing—where it will be remembered only in relation to the purposes to which it has been applied.

SECTION VI.

TESTS OF COVETOUSNESS.

But the more insidious and seductive the forms of covetousness, and the greater its prevalence, the more necessary does it become to study the disease in its symptoms; to trace it to its earliest signs, and view it in its slightest indications. In order, however, that the patient may benefit by the investigation, skill is not more indispensable in the physician, than a solicitous impartiality in himself. In vain would it be even for the great Physician to specify the various signs of this moral malady, unless those who are the subjects of it voluntarily lay bare their breasts, and anxiously lend themselves to ascertain whether or not the plague-spot be upon them. With-

out this, they would close their eyes to the presence of ninety-nine symptoms, and accept the absence of the hundredth as a demonstration of their perfect freedom from the taint; while, on the other hand, a tender and faithful conscience would overlook the absence of the ninety-nine, and take alarm at the presence of the hundredth. The absence of one or two out of numerous symptoms of a bodily disease, does not warrant us hastily to conclude that we are totally exempt from danger, and to congratulate ourselves on our escape; for we recollect that few persons exhibit *all* the signs of any disease. And moral diseases, like physical, are modified by temperament and circumstances; so that if some of the indications of the malady in question are wanting, a little impartial examination may disclose others sufficiently determinate to awaken alarm, and produce humiliation.

"What are those signs, then," we will suppose the reader to inquire, "what are some of those signs whose presence would indicate the existence of covetousness in *my* character?" And here, reader, we would remind you that the inquiry is to be conducted under the eye of God; that

a consultation of physicians over your dying bed would not call for greater seriousness than the present exercise; and that an appeal to Omniscience, and a prayer for seasonable grace, would not be the least favourable tokens of your earnestness and desire to be benefited.

You have seen the prevalence of covetousness, and its power of insinuation under fictitious names; are *you* now, for the first time, subjecting your heart to a thorough inspection on the subject? But ought not this simple fact, that you are doing it now for the first time, to excite your suspicions, and prepare you to find, that, while you have been sleeping, the enemy has been sowing tares in your heart? Taking it for granted that you are living in the habit of communion with God, you no doubt advert, from time to time, in the language of lamentation and confession, to various sins which have never appeared in your conduct, but which, as a common partaker of sinful humanity, you suspect to exist seminally in your heart;—is covetousness named among them?—When last did you deprecate it? when last were you earnest in prayer for a spirit of Christian liberality?

Your station, property, or mental character invest you, it may be, with a measure of authority and influence; do you ever employ that power to oppress, and to overrule right? Are you, what the poor denominate, *hard-hearted?* capable of *driving a hard bargain?* rigid and inexorable as an Egyptian task-master in your mode of conducting business? enforcing every legal claim, pressing every demand, and exacting every obligation to the extremest point of justice?

Are you, what is commonly denominated *mean?* cutting down the enjoyments of those dependent on you to the very quick? never rewarding exertion a tittle beyond what is "in the bond?" doling out requital for services with so niggardly a hand, that Want alone would submit to your bondage?

Can you "go beyond, and defraud another in any matter?" Do not hastily resent the question. For only remember, first, the multiplied laws which already exist against fraud; and the insufficiency of this vast and complicated apparatus as implied in the continued labours of the legislature to prevent, and of the executive to punish, fraud—all intimating the dreadful prevalence of

the evil. Recollect, also, that no multiplication of laws can supply the place of principle and integrity; artifice would still find a way of escape through the finest *network* of human legislation. Then, again, bear in mind the grievous but acknowledged fact, that two kinds of morality obtain in life—the morality of private life, all sensitiveness, delicacy, and honour; and the morality of business, all secrecy in its own movements—all vigilance respecting the movements of others—all suspicion of their representations—all protestation and confidence of the superior excellence of its own wares—all depreciation of theirs—a morality that deems a thousand things justifiable in business, which in private life would be condemned. Now, we take it for granted that you would not violate the law; that you would shudder at the bare shadow of dishonesty; but do you never avail yourself in business of the ignorance and weakness of others? Do you ever take advantage of that class of the *secrets* of your business, which, though deemed defensible by the world, are, to say the least, of a doubtful character? Are you satisfied with escaping, and perhaps, barely escaping, the penalty of the law? and with pleading

that you are only doing as others do?—and all this for the sake of a little paltry gain?

Providence, perhaps, has assigned you a station in society, which, though it leaves many below you, places numbers above you. Are you content with the allotment? If you regard your own situation with dissatisfaction, and the superior advantages of others with envy, and speak disparagingly of their merits, and repine at your worldly circumstances, though at the same time the imperishable treasures of grace are placed within your reach, what are you but saying, in effect, that no heavenly wealth can compensate in your esteem for the unrighteous mammon after which you pine?

We have adverted to the numerous maxims and proverbs by the currency and frequent repetition of which the world seeks to fortify itself against the claims of benevolence, and to justify itself in its all-grasping endeavours;—do you find these maxims occasionally falling in self-justification from your own lips? He whom you acknowledge as your Lord and Master has declared, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive,"—a saying which falls like a paradox, an enigma, an impossi-

bility, on the infidel covetousness of the human heart,—do you find that your heart, when left to itself, sympathizes more cordially on this point with your Master or with the world? The same Divine authority has pronounced it to be a characteristic of the pagan and ungodly world, to care for the provision of their temporal wants as solicitously as if no Providence superintended the world, no "heavenly Father" cared for them;—do you stand apart from the irreligious in this respect? If their conduct proves that they have no God, does yours prove that you have one? If the world could lay open your breast, would it not be justified in concluding that though you have a God, you cannot trust him? that, in temporal things, you are obliged, after all, to do as they do —rely exclusively upon yourself? And when the hour returns for your appearance in the closet, in the sanctuary, at the post of Christian usefulness and benevolence, but returns to mourn your absence—where then are you to be searched for with the greatest likelihood of being found? At the altars of Mammon? amidst the engrossing cares and services of the world?

Does not the dread of a petty loss, or the pros-

pect of a petty gain, fill you with emotions beyond what the magnitude of either would warrant? And were a committee of the wisest and the best of men to sit in friendly judgment on your worldly affairs, would they not be likely to pronounce that your mind might be safely discharged of all that solicitude which now disturbs it, and be left entirely free for the service of God? You confess that God may justly complain of you as slothful and unfaithful in his service;—would Mammon be justified in urging a similar complaint? or, rather, may he not boast of you as one of his most diligent and exemplary servants? Are you providing more earnestly for the future moments of time than for the future ages of eternity? Are you spending life in providing the means of living, and are you thus living to no end? Are you preparing to depart? or would death find you saying, "Soul, take thine ease?" counting your gains? loath to quit your possessions? and "setting your affections on things on the earth?" Have you engaged in any worldly avocation or object, not from necessity, but choice? and merely to augment your means of ostentation and indulgence? And are you to be found giving early notice to the

world of any little addition made to your property, by an instant addition to your establishment or expenditure? Were two courses open to you, the one bright with gold, but beset with temptation; the other less lucrative, but rich in religious advantages,—which would you be likely to adopt?

Are you, at times, tempted to vow that you will never give any thing more in charity? Instances are by no means of rare occurrence of imposture practised on the generous, and of kindness requited with ingratitude, and of benevolent funds unfaithfully administered; and some of these painful examples may have come under your own observation; — do you detect yourself, at such times, storing them up as arguments against future charity? conveying them, as weapons of defence, into the armoury of covetousness, to be brought out and employed at the next assault upon your purse? When you are called to listen to a discourse on the perils attending the possession of wealth, does the seed fall into congenial soil? or, is it necessary, as often as the subject is introduced, that the speaker should reproduce his "strong arguments," in order to reproduce full conviction in your mind? Which, think you,

would make the greater demand on your patience; an argument to prove that you ought to give more to the cause of benevolence? or, an excuse and justification for giving less?

You may sometimes find yourself passing a silent verdict of praise or blame on the pecuniary conduct of others; now, when you see an individual more than ordinarily careful of his money, do you regard him with a feeling of complacency? when you hear his conduct condemned, are you disposed to speak in his defence? or, when you see a person prodigal of his property, is your feeling that of astonishment, as if he were guilty of a sin which you could not comprehend?

It is hardly possible that the temperature of benevolence should remain quite stationary at the same point, in any mind, for years together; now, on instituting a comparison between the past and the present, do you find that you have suffered no decrease of genuine sensibility? that you are quite as accessible to the appeals of beneficence now, as you were ten or twenty years ago, and conscious of as much pleasure in yielding to them? It is highly improbable that your worldly affairs are precisely the same now as they were at that dis-

tance of time; but, if the change has been on the side of prosperity, have the oblations which you have laid on the altar of gratitude been *proportionally* increased? or, if the change has been adverse, have your gifts been decreased *only* in proportion? And, among your regrets at the change, are you conscious of a pang at the necessity of *that decrease?*

It is to the honour of the present day, that the calls of benevolence multiply fast;—which, is there reason to believe, you resent more, their rapid multiplication? or your inability to meet them all? But, in order to meet them, have you never thought of retrenching any superfluity? of reducing your expenditure? or, do you only practise that precarious and cheap benevolence, which waits for the crumbs that fall from your table?

You may be scrupulously abstaining from certain worldly amusements, but having marked off a given space in which you do not allow yourself to range, how are you conducting yourself in that portion in which you do move? Are you not vying with the world in self-gratification? thinking of little besides the multiplication of your comforts? living under the dominion of the inferior

appetites? as far removed from the salutary restraints and self-denial of the gospel, as from the exploded austerities of the monastic life? In mechanics, the strength of a moving power is estimated by the amount of resistance which it overcomes; now, what is the strength of your benevolence when tried by a similar test? what does it overcome? does it resist and bear down your vanity, love of ease, and self-interest? does it impel you to sacrifice "the pride of life" that you may increase your contributions to the cause of mercy?

Of how many professing Christians may it not be appropriately asked, not only "*How* are you living, but *where?*" You have retired from business, it may be; but, in taking that step, whose will did you consult? Did you refer it to the good pleasure of God? did you retire that you might do *more good* than before? and are you doing it? did you *look out* for a sphere in which you might render yourself useful? But, whether you were formerly immersed in the business of the world or not, have you escaped from a worldly spirit? In the choice of your place of abode, in the distribution of your time, and the formation

of your plans, do you take counsel from the word of God? Are you acting on the Christian motto, "No man liveth to himself?" and are you employing your various talents as if they came to you, bearing this inscription, from the hand that lends them, "Occupy till I come?"

You may hear occasionally of a munificent donation made unexpectedly by Christian gratitude to the cause of God;—what is your first emotion at the report?—admiration of the act? and gratitude to the grace which produced it?—or a feeling that the donor has unnecessarily exceeded the *rules* of ordinary benevolence? and a disposition to impute motives of vanity and ostentation? If a benevolent mind had conceived some new project of mercy requiring pecuniary support, would your presence be a congenial atmosphere for the bud to unfold in? or, would the first emotion expressed in your countenance be a chilling doubt, or a blighting, withering frown? True benevolence, is not only voluntary as opposed to reluctant—it is often spontaneous as opposed to solicited;—but does yours always expect to be waited on? has it always to be reminded? does it need to be urged? does it never

anticipate the appeal, and run to meet its object? And when you do give, is it your object to part with as little as you can without shame, as if you were driving a hard bargain with one who sought to overreach you? and is that little parted with reluctantly, with a half-closed hand, as if you were discharging a doubtful debt on compulsion? Is it given with the air of a capitulation, or bribe, to importunity, leaving the applicant who receives it ill at ease? Do you think highly of the trifle you give? not only calculating beforehand how much you can *spare*, but frequently remembering it afterwards? pluming yourself on the benevolent exploit? looking out for its emblazonment in the ensuing Report? and wondering how men can deny themselves the luxury of doing similar good? —then the mark of selfishness is upon you. For, only remember how cheerfully you are constantly parting with similar sums for purposes of self-indulgence, soon forgetting them, repeating and forgetting them again, "thinking nothing of them."

But to lay open this sin in all its disguises is impossible. These are mere *hints* for its detection. Owing to their deficiency, however, or to

your own negligence in applying them, the evil sought for may still be undiscovered. But let nothing flatter you into the persuasion that you are exempt from it. If any believer of the Jewish church could have defied its remotest approaches, surely that saint was David: if any description of natural character could form a guarantee against the sin, here was a man who appears to have brought with him into the world the elements of magnanimity and generosity of soul; yet we hear him cry, in the full consciousness of danger, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness." If any order of piety in the Christian church could have claimed entire immunity from the sin, surely it was that to which Timothy belonged. Yet we hear the apostle Paul warning even him. He had seen so many apparent proficients in piety drawn in by this moral *Maelstroom*, and "drowned in perdition," that he called on his "dearly beloved Timothy, his own son in the faith"—called on him with more than his usual earnestness—to flee to the greatest distance from this fatal vortex. "O man of God," said he, "flee these things." As if, by a special appointment of Heaven, the monitory strain addressed to *a man*

of God—to *such* a man of God—and echoing through the church in all ages, should make it inexcusable for all inferior piety ever to doubt its liability to the sin. Of all the myriads who have appeared on the face of the earth, Jesus Christ is the only being who was entirely free from the taint. But *he* was; he embodied the very opposite principle; he was the personification of love. This it was which constituted his fitness to wage war with selfishness, and to become the Leader of the hosts of the God of love in their conflicts with a selfish world. Had they been faithful to his cause, long ere this they would have reaped the fruits of a final and universal conquest. "But all seek their own; not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

SECTION VII.

THE GUILT AND EVILS OF COVETOUSNESS.

Of the love of money, the apostle declares that it "is the root of all evil." Not that he meant to lay it down as a universal proposition that every act of wickedness originates in cupidity. But that, while many other sources of sin exist, there is no *description* of crime which this vice has not prompted men to commit. Of the life-giving tree of prophetic vision it is recorded, as a miracle of fertile variety, that "it bare twelve manner of fruits;" but, as if to eclipse that heavenly wonder, here is an earthly *root* yielding poisons and death, at all times, and in endless variety.

On no subject, perhaps, are the Scriptures more copious and minute than on the sin of covetousness. If a faithful portrait of its loathsome cha-

racter can induce us to hate it; if a sight of the virtues which it has extinguished, the vices with which it is often associated, and the depraved characters in whom it has most flourished; if the tenderest dissuasives from it, and the terrors of the Lord warning us against it; if Sinai and Calvary uniting and protesting against it,—if all this combined can deter us from the sin of covetousness, then the Scriptures have omitted nothing which could save us from its guilty contamination.

"Thou shalt not covet." Such is the language of that command which not only concludes, but at the same time completes, and guards, and encompasses the moral law. If love be the fulfilling of the law, it follows that the whole decalogue is to be regarded as a law against selfishness; so that *every selfish and every covetous act is, in effect, an infraction of the whole law.* It is to love ourselves at the expense both of God and our neighbour.

Covetousness appears to have been the principal element in the first transgression. For did not the sin consist, chiefly, in an inordinate desire for an object on which God had virtually written, "Thou shalt not covet," and which properly belonged to another? in a disposition which origi-

nates all the acts of a grasping cupidity? It is observable that the terms in which the primary sin is described, bear a close resemblance to those in which Achan describes his covetous act. "When I saw among the spoils," said he, "a goodly Babylonish garment, and a wedge of gold, then I coveted them, and took them." "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." She saw, she coveted, she partook.

And having entered into the composition of the first sin, and thus acquired a bad pre-eminence, *it has maintained its fatal ascendancy under each succeeding dispensation of religion.*

Covetousness, in the person of Lot, appears to have been the great sin of the patriarchal dispensation. The hope of increasing his wealth allured him first to pitch his tent near Sodom, and at length prevailed on him to enter the city, and to breathe its pestilential atmosphere: in consequence of which he became subsequently involved in acts so grossly sinful, that all the imperfections of the other patriarchs combined together, seem

insignificant compared with it; nor should we probably have supposed that he was a subject of piety had not the Bible assured us of the fact.

In the instance of Achan, to which we have just alluded, covetousness was the first sin of the Israelites under their new dispensation in Canaan. It violated an express command; brought defeat on the arms of Israel, and triumph to their foes.

What was the first sin of the Christian church? it was covetousness in the instance of Ananias and Sapphira. It was covetousness which first interrupted the joy, and stained the virgin glory, of the present dispensation. And, presently, we shall see that it will take a leading part in the fearful drama of the final apostacy.

The Scriptures exhibit covetousness as *pervading all classes of mankind.* They describe it as having thrown the world generally into a state of infidel distrust of the Divine Providence, and of dissatisfaction with the Divine allotments. "For after all these things," saith Christ, "do the Gentiles seek." They seek after worldly objects as independently and intently as if there were no providence to care for them, no God to be consulted. They pursue them to the entire neglect

of every higher object. Sometimes covetousness has been seen actuating and debasing the character of an entire people. Against the Israelites it is alleged, "From the least of them even unto the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness." Of Tyre it is said, "By thy great wisdom and by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches ..... thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God." And of Chaldea it is said, "Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil." The insatiable desires, or the continued prosperity and boundless possessions of these nations had left nothing in the national character but rapacity, arrogance, and a proud impiety which braved the very throne of God.

Descending to examine the component parts of a nation, we find covetousness infecting and pervading them all. Hear avarice speaking by the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar, "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom..... I have robbed their treasures..... my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people; and as

one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth." How vividly does Jeremiah depict its atrocities in the unbridled conduct of a Jewish king; "Thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it." And who that is familiar with sacred history does not here think of Ahab coveting the vineyard of Naboth, and obtaining it by artifice, subornation, and murder?

Covetousness in rulers leads to bribery and injustice. "Thou shalt take no gift," said Moses, "for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous." Accordingly, it is recorded of the sons of Samuel, that "they walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment." And of the Jewish rulers, "they are greedy dogs which can never have enough . . . . . they all look to their own way; every one for his gain from his quarter." And of Felix, that "he hoped that money would have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him." Covetousness has turned the priests and ministers of God into mercenary hirelings; "The heads of Zion judge for reward,

and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us." In the department of trade, this sin induces the buyer to depreciate the thing which he wishes to purchase, and the seller to employ "divers weights and measures,"—thus generating fraud, falsehood, and injustice: while in both it leads to an impious impatience of the sacred restraints of the Sabbath, inducing them to say, "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat? making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; and sell the refuse of the wheat?" Covetousness turns the master into an oppressor, and the servant into a thief. In illustration of the former, the Scripture describes a Laban evading his engagements with Jacob, "changing his wages ten times," and exacting from him years of laborious servitude; and it denounces those who, though their fields had been reaped, "kept back the hire of the labourer by fraud." And in illustration of the latter, it exhibits an unscrupulous Gehazi, plausibly lying, and

enriching himself at the expense of his master's character, and of the honour of God; and it exhorts servants to "be obedient unto their masters, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity." Thus have all classes, in various degrees, lived under the dominion of avarice.

The Scriptures ascribe to the same sin, in whole or in part, some of *the foulest acts, and the most fearful results, that have stained the history of man.* Some of these we have already named. Oppression, violence, and murder, have been among its familiar deeds. "Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light they practise it, because it is in the power of their hands. And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage." "So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; who taketh away the life of the owners thereof."

In the person of Balaam covetousness essayed to curse the chosen people of God; but failing in the infernal attempt, and yet resolved to clutch the promised reward, it devised another course,—it "taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before

the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication." The dreadful device succeeded, the displeasure of God was excited against the people, so that "there fell in one day three and twenty thousand." Such was "the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." And so ingenious, persevering, and fatally successful, was "Balaam for reward." Covetousness instigated Judas to betray the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, "for thirty pieces of silver." It induced Ananias and Sapphira to "tempt the Holy Ghost ..... to lie, not unto men, but unto God." In the base expectation of turning "the gift of God" to a lucrative account, it led Simon to offer to purchase that gift "with money." It has even assumed the sacred office, trod the courts of the Lord, "brought in damnable heresies," and "with feigned words"—words studied to render the heresy palatable and marketable—it has "made merchandise" of men. It converted the Jewish temple into "a den of thieves;" and among the articles of merchandise in the mystical Babylon were seen "the souls of men."

The scriptural *classification* of this sin is illus-

trative of its vile and aggravated nature: for *it stands associated with all the principal sins.*

In that fearful catalogue of the vices of the heathen world furnished by the apostle Paul, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, covetousness stands forth conspicuous.

When the apostle Peter is describing the character of those false teachers who would arise in the church,—and describing it with a view to its being recognised as soon as seen, and hated as soon as recognised,—he names covetousness as one of their leading features. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they, with feigned words, make merchandise of you."

Covetousness will be *one of the characteristics of the final apostacy.* "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous,

boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."

In the last quotation, covetousness is described as more than an attendant evil of the apostacy—it is one of its very elements. In the following places *it is identified with idolatry* :—"Fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; .... for this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." In addition to which, *the apostle James evidently identifies it with adultery.* "Ye covet, and have not; .... ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses,

know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Covetousness is not only subversive of the threefold law of Christian duty, personal, social, and divine, but it stands connected with each of the opposite series of vices. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness." "I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls; a heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children."

In the first part of this classification, we find

covetousness distinguishing itself as a prime element in the great system of heathenism, even when that empire of depravity was at its worst. In the second part, we see it forming a leading feature in the character of men whose enormous impiety the apostle appears to have felt it a labour to describe. In the third, we behold covetousness lending an additional shade of horror to the perilous times of the apostacy—times so fearful, in the estimation of the apostle, that we may rest assured he would have admitted into his description of them none but evils of first-rate magnitude—and yet covetousness is not only there, it is among the first evils which he specifies. His classification implies, that of all the sins which will then prevail, selfishness will be the prolific root, and covetousness the first fruit. So that when the whole history of covetousness shall be read forth from the book of God's remembrance, it will be found that it entered largely into the first fall of man, and into the last fall of the church; and that during the long lapse of time between, it never lost its power, nor ceased to reign. From the fourth, we learn, that if the word of God identifies covetousness with some

sins rather than with others, it is, partly, because those sins rank first in guilt; leaving us to infer that if there were a sin which ranked higher still, covetousness would have been identified with that sin. What was the great sin of the Jewish dispensation, but the sin of idolatry? it was to repeal the theocracy, to be guilty of treason against the throne of Heaven. "But," says the apostle Paul, fearful as it is, "covetousness is idolatry." What must have been the abhorrence with which a pious Jew regarded adultery, when the sin became associated in his mind as the scriptural representation of the guilt of idolatry! for "Judah committed adultery with stocks and with stones." And yet, great as his conception of its enormity must have been, the apostle James declares of the covetous, that he is violating the most sacred obligations to God, that he is committing adultery with gold. And what can be more fearful in the eyes of a sincere Christian than the sin of apostacy? of trampling under foot the Son of God? it is the very consummation of guilt. And yet, fearful as it is, the apostle Peter intimates that covetousness is apostacy. And from the fifth part, we learn that covetousness repeals the en-

tire law of love; that it proclaims war against all the virtues included in living "soberly, righteously, and godly," and is in sworn confederacy with all the opposite sins included in personal intemperance, injustice towards men, and impiety towards God. Nor is the reason of this alliance, or scriptural classification, obscure. Covetousness is classed with intemperance—or the sins which appear to terminate on the man himself—because, like them, it tends to debase and imbrute him. It is ranked with injustice—or the sins directed against society—because, like them, if indulged, and carried out, it seeks its gratification at the expense of all the social laws, whether enacted by God or man. And it is associated with impiety—or sins directly against God—because, like them, it effaces the image of God from the heart, and enshrines an idol there in his stead.

Such is a mere outline of the representations of Scripture in relation to the guilt and evils of covetousness. Entering with the first transgression, and violating the spirit of the whole law, it has polluted, and threatened the existence, of each dispensation of religion; infected all classes

and relations of society; shown itself capable of the foulest acts; is described as occupying a leading place in the worst state of heathenism, in the worst times of the apostacy, and in the worst characters of those times; and has the worst sins for its appropriate emblems, and its nearest kindred, and "all evil" in its train.

To exaggerate the evils of a passion which exhibits such a monopoly of guilt, would certainly be no easy task. It has systematized deceit, and made it a science. Cunning is its chosen counsellor and guide. It finds its way, as by instinct, through all the intricacies of the great labyrinth of fraud. It parts with no company, and refuses no aid, through fear of contamination. Blood is not too sacred for it to buy, nor religion too divine for it to sell. From the first step in fraud to the dreadful consummation of apostacy or murder, covetousness is familiar with every step of the long, laborious, and fearful path. Could we only see it embodied, what a monster should we behold! Its eyes have no tears. With more than the fifty hands of the fabled giant, it grasps at every thing around. In its march through the world, it has been accompanied by artifice and

fraud, rapine and injustice, cruelty and murder; while behind it have dragged heavily its swarm of victims—humanity bleeding, and justice in chains, and religion expiring under its heavy burdens; orphans, and slaves, and oppressed hirelings, a wailing multitude, reaching to the skirts of the horizon; and thus dividing the earth between them, (for how small the number of those who were not to be found either triumphing in its van, or suffering in its train,) it has, more than any other conqueror, realized the ambition of gaining the whole world, of establishing a universal empire. From the first step of its desolating course, its victims began to appeal to God; and, as it has gone on in its guilty career, their cries have been thickening and gathering intenseness at every step, and in every age, till the whole creation, aiding them in their mighty grief, has become vocal with woe, and their cries have ascended, "and entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." "And shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord?" Even now his ministers of wrath are arming against it. Even now the sword of ultimate justice is receiving a keener edge for its destruction: it is at large only by

respite and sufferance, from moment to moment. During each of these moments, its accumulation of pelf is only an accumulation "of wrath against the day of wrath." And when those dreadful stores shall be finally distributed among the heirs of wrath, covetousness shall be loaded with the most ample and awful portion. Its vast capacity, enlarged by its perpetual craving after what it had not, shall only render it a more capacious vessel of wrath, fitted to destruction.

From this scriptural representation of the guilt of covetousness, let us proceed to consider some of the specific evils which it inflicts on Christians individually, on the visible church, and, through these, on the world.

Were it our object to present a complete catalogue of the injuries which it inflicts on religion, we should begin by adverting to the fact, that it detains numbers from God. Careful and troubled about many things, they entirely neglect the one thing needful. The world retains them so effectually in its service, that they have no time, no heart, to spare for religion; and though some of them at times may cast a wistful glance in that direction, and even steal a visit, in thought, to the

Saviour's feet, yet, like their prototype in the gospel, they "go away sorrowing," for the spell of mammon is upon them.

As to the professor of Christianity, the evil in question operates to his injury, partly by engaging so much of that energy for the world, the whole of which would not have been too much for religion. The obstacles to the salvation of a man are so numerous and formidable, that the Scriptures represent his ultimate success as depending on his "giving all diligence to it." In the economy of salvation, therefore, God graciously undertakes to watch over and provide for his temporal wants, that, being relieved from all distraction from that quarter, he might be able to bend and devote his chief strength to the attainment of heaven. But, in guilty counteraction of this arrangement, the covetous professor divides his forces between these two objects most disproportionately. He has but just sufficient fuel to offer up a sacrifice to God, and yet he consumes the principal part of it in sacrificing to Mammon. The undivided powers of his mind would not be too much for the claims of religion, and yet he severs and sends the greater

proportion of his strength in an opposite direction. The consequence is, that his piety is kept in a low, doubtful, disgraceful state. His religious course is marked with hesitation and embarrassment. The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, engross that feeling which is the appropriate soil of religion, and which belongs to it alone. And to expect to reap the fruits of Christian benevolence from such a mind, would be to look for grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles.

Nor does covetousness operate less injuriously by taking off his supreme trust from God, and giving it to the world. If a staff be placed in the hand of a bent and feeble man, what more natural than that he should lean on it? Man is that impotent traveller, and wealth is the staff which offers to support his steps. Hence, in the word of God, it is repeatedly intimated that to possess riches, and to trust in them, is one and the same thing, except where grace makes the distinction. The term *mammon*, for instance, according to its derivation, imports, *whatever men are apt to confide in.* The original term for *faith* is of the same derivation, and for the same reason

—because it implies such a reliance on God as the worldly mind places on riches. So that mammon came to signify riches, because men so commonly put their trust on them. And when our Lord perceived the astonishment he had excited by exclaiming, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven," the only explanation which he gave, and which he deemed sufficient, imported, that as the danger of riches consisted in trusting in them, so the difficulty of possessing them, and not trusting in them, is next to an impossibility—a difficulty which can only be surmounted by omnipotent grace.

Now, to trust in any created object, is to partake of its littleness, mutability, and debasement. But money is a creature of circumstances, the sport of every wind; the Christian mammonist, therefore, can only resemble the object of his trust. By choosing a heavenly treasure, and making it the object of paramount regard, he would have gradually received the impress of its celestial attributes; but by giving his heart to earthly gain, he identifies himself with all its earthly qualities; lets himself down, and adapts himself to its insignificance; and vibrates to all its fluctua-

tions, as if the world were an organized body, of which he was the pulse.

The inconsistencies in which his covetous attachments involve him are grievous and many. His enlightened judgment impels him for happiness in one direction, and his earthly inclinations draw him in another. In the morning, and at night, probably, he prays, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;" and yet, during the interval, he pursues the material of temptation with an avidity not to be exceeded by the keenest worldling. He hears, without questioning, our Lord's declaration concerning the danger of riches; and yet, though he is already laden with the *thick clay*, and is daily augmenting his load, he doubts not of passing through the eye of a needle as a matter of course. He professes to be only the steward of his property; and yet wastes it on himself, as if he were its irresponsible master. He pretends to be an admirer of men who counted not their *lives* dear unto them, provided they might serve the cause of Christ; and yet he almost endures a martyrdom in sacrificing a pittance of his *money* to that cause; while to give more than that pittance, especially if it

involved an act of self-denial, is a martyrdom he never thought of suffering. He prays for the world's conversion, and yet holds back one of the means with which God has intrusted him to aid that specific object. He professes to have given himself up voluntarily and entirely to Christ; and yet has to be urged and entreated to relinquish his hold on a small sum which would benefit the church. Indeed, the truths and means of salvation appear to have been so designedly arranged by God to condemn the covetous professor, that were he not blinded by passion, and kept in countenance by so numerous a fellowship, he would hear a rebuke in every profession he utters, and meet with condemnation at every step he takes.

Covetousness frequently serves in the stead of a thousand bonds to hold a religious professor in league with the world. Indeed, the sin may be much more potent in him than in many of the avowed ungodly around him. In them, it has to divide the heart with other sinful propensities; but in him, perhaps, it reigns alone. They can range and wander at will over a larger field of sinful indulgences, but he is restricted to this

single gratification. As a Christian professor, he must abstain from intemperance, licentiousness, and profanity; but worldliness is a sphere in which he may indulge to a certain extent without suspicion, for the indulgence comes not within human jurisdiction. If he would be thought a Christian, he must not be seen mingling in certain society, nor indulging in a certain class of worldly amusements; but, without at all endangering his Christian reputation, he may emulate the most worldly in the embellishment of his house, the decoration of his person, the splendour of his equipage, or the luxury of his table. Accordingly, the only apparent difference between him and them is—not in the greater moderation of his earthly aims, not in the superior simplicity of his tastes, the spiritual elevation of his pursuits, the enlarged benevolence and Christian devotedness of his life—but, that the time which they occupy in spending, he employs in accumulating; the energies which they waste in worldly pleasures, he exhausts in worldly pursuits; the property which they devote to amusements abroad, he lavishes on indulgences at home; and while they are pursuing their gratification in one direc-

tion, he is indemnifying himself for not joining them by pursuing his gratification as eagerly in another. The loss of one of the bodily senses, it is said, quickens the perception of those that remain; worldliness alone remains to him, and that is quickened and strengthened by perpetual exercise. All that is unsanctified in his nature flows from the fountain of his heart with the greater force, that it has only this one channel in which to run. He may therefore be the more worldly in reality, for not allowing himself to be worldly in appearance. His worldliness is only compressed into a smaller compass. Profess what he may, and stand as high as he may in the opinion of his fellow-professors, he is essentially a worldly man. The world has its sects as well as the church, and he may be said to belong to one of the "stricter sects" of the world.

Covetousness generates discontent: and this is an element with which no Christian grace can long be held in affinity. It magnifies trivial losses, and diminishes the most magnificent blessings to a point; it thinks highly of the least sacrifice which it may grudgingly make in the cause of God, feels no enterprise in his service, and never

considers itself at liberty to leave its little circle of *decent* selfishness, in which its murmurs on account of what it has not, are always louder than its thanks for what it has. "Let your conversation," therefore, says the apostle, "be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have." "Godliness, with contentment, is great gain."

Covetousness neutralizes the effect of the preaching of the gospel. The Saviour saw this abundantly verified in his own ministry: and his parable of the sower intimated, that his ministers would see it exemplified in theirs also. The judgment of the hearer, it may be, is convinced of the divinity of religion; he feels its power, and trembles; he beholds its attractions, and is captivated. And could he, at such times, be detached awhile from his worldly pursuits, and be closely plied with the melting and majestic claims of the gospel, he might, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, be induced to lay up for himself a treasure in heaven. But the seed has fallen among thorns; "The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and render it unfruitful." His impressions are

written in sand; and no sooner does he leave the house of God, than his worldly plans and prospects come back like the returning tide, and utterly efface them.

Closely allied with this evil are formality and hypocrisy in religion. "They speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." To the eye of Omniscience they present the hateful spectacle of so many pieces of solemn formality going through the attitudes and signs of devotion, but destitute of all corresponding emotions within. He asks for the heart alone; but they have brought him all except the heart. *That* is far away, in the mart, the field, the business of the world, "buying, and selling, and getting gain."

In connexion with this formality, there will necessarily exist a weariness and impatience under the restraints of the Sabbath. The worldly pro-

fessor feels during the sacred hours as if every thing important were standing still. He is not sensible of any need for a day of rest, for the world does not tire him, or tires him only as a fatiguing pleasure, to which he is anxious to return with renewed zest. And, until he can so return, the language of his heart, in relation to the Sabbath, is, "Behold what a weariness is it!"

But if religion be irksome to a person because it interrupts his worldly pursuits, it is but a short and easy step for him to turn religion itself into traffick. "Godliness . . . . . is gain;" but he reverses the proposition, and "supposes that gain is godliness." Like the ancient Jews, he would crowd the temple courts with "the tables of the money-changers," and convert the sanctuary itself into the palace of mammon. His motive for assembling with the worshippers of God may be expressed in the language of the Shechemites, when adopting the religious rites of the sons of Jacob: "Shall not their cattle, and their substance, and every beast of theirs, be ours?" But as the ruling principle of his conduct is gain, the same principle which induced him to assume

religion may lead him to renounce it, and to "draw back to perdition."

How many who had apparently deserted the service of the world, and enrolled themselves among the servants of God, does covetousness again reclaim, and swear them to allegiance afresh. "They did run well," but the fable of Atalanta became their history—a golden bait was cast in their path; they stopped to take it, and lost the race. In how touching a manner does the apostle refer to the fatal declension of some—probably living characters, known both to himself and Timothy—and impute their apostacy entirely to their avarice. "Money," .... saith he, "which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." And how likely is it that Bunyan drew from personal observation, when, in his inimitable allegory, he describes the professed pilgrims, Hold-the-world, Money-love, Save-all, and By-ends—names which still stand for living realities—as leaving the road, at the solicitation of Demas, to look at a silver mine "in a little hill called Lucre." "Now," he adds, "whether they fell into the pit by looking over

the brink thereof, or whether they went down to dig, or whether they were smothered in the bottom by the damps that commonly arise, of these things I am not certain; *but this I observed, that they never were seen again in the way.*"

But where covetousness does not lead the professed believer to open apostacy, it involves him in the guilt of idolatry; and this, in the eye of Scripture, is a step beyond. If the former be the rejection of the true God, the latter is the adoption of a false one. Endeavour to escape from the charge as he may, *his covetousness is idolatry.* The general impression on hearing this proposition is, that the term *idolatry* is only employed by the apostle in an accommodated sense—that covetousness is only *figurative* idolatry. But in the figure lies its force. There is not more *essential* idolatry, at this moment, on the face of the earth, than that which the avaricious man pays to his gold. The ancient Persian who adored the sun *only as the visible image of God,* was guiltless of idolatry compared with him. And the only pretence he can have for saying he is not guilty, is, that he does not perform acts of bodily prostration before it. But acts of

mere formal homage are no more necessary to constitute a man a worshipper of Mammon, than they are to render him a real worshipper of God; in each instance, the homage of the heart is in the stead of all outward prostrations. And does not his gold receive that? Is not his heart a temple from which God has been excluded, in order to make room for Mammon? While he worships God, formally, as if He were only an idol, does he not accord to his gold as much cordiality as if it were God? regarding it with all those deep feelings, and mental glances of confidence, which should be reserved for God alone? The idols of the heathen stood, so to speak, between heaven and earth, obscuring the vision of God, intercepting, and appropriating the incense which should have ascended to the eternal throne: and does not his gold, instead of leading his thoughts in gratitude to God, stand between him and the Divine Being, concealing God from his view, engrossing his thoughts to itself, and filling him with that satisfaction which the soul should find in God alone? If his gold could be endowed with the power of perception, would it not be tempted to think itself a god? If it

possessed the power of reading his heart towards it, would it not find its image enshrined there? and a degree of affection lavished on it, and a closeness of communion maintained with it, such as a god might accept? His *covetousness is idolatry.*

Among the fatal evils inflicted by covetousness on the church collectively, the corruption of its doctrines, and deterioration of its piety, form one of the greatest magnitude. This it has done in two ways; first, by obtruding men into the sacred office who have taught erroneous doctrine as zealously as if it had been true; and, secondly, by obtruding others who have taught an orthodox creed with which they had no sympathy, as coldly and heartlessly as if it had been false. The former have been founders of heretical sects, and propagators of a spurious piety; the latter have contributed to lay all piety to sleep, and to turn the church itself into the tomb of religion. The former have often *prophesied falsely* because *the people loved to have it so,* consulting the depraved tastes of those who *would not endure sound doctrine;* the latter have consulted only their own tastes, which sought no higher gratification than

the sordid gains of office. "Woe unto them!.... for they have run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward." "A heart they have exercised with covetous practices: cursed children,..... following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." Like him both have equally, and for the same reasons, laboured in effect to "curse the children of Israel." Like the Pharisees of old, both have equally, and for the same reasons, "made long prayers" their pretence, but the "devouring of widows' houses" their end. Like Judas, both have equally, and for the same reasons, betrayed the Son of God into the hands of his enemies. Like Simon Magus, both have trafficked in the things of God, Both alike have been "greedy of filthy lucre;" have obtruded into the courts of the Lord; taken up a position between God and man; and, through covetousness, have made merchandise of human souls. They have brought the world into the church; and have sold the church to the world. This is the triumph, the apotheosis of Mammon. Piety has left the temple weeping at the sight; morality itself has been loud in its condemnation; an ungodly world has triumphed,

and "the Son of God been crucified afresh, and put to an open shame." "Woe unto them."

The magnitude of this evil is further apparent in the fact, that it has not only *threatened* to frustrate the design of the Christian church, as the instrument of the world's conversion; but has done more than any other sin towards the fulfilment of the threat. That our blessed Lord consecrated his church to the high office of converting the world, is evident from the final command which he gave it, to go and preach his gospel to every creature. That the execution of this sacred trust would be endangered principally by a spirit of covetousness, was possibly presignified by the sin of Judas. But a more emphatic intimation of the same danger had been given in the history of the Jewish church; for the *first* sin of that church in Canaan, as we have remarked already, was *in the accursed thing*, when Israel fled before the men of Ai. And was there not a still more significant intimation afforded, in the earliest days of the Christian church, of danger from the same quarter? its very *first* sin consisted in one of its members *keeping back part of his property* through covetousness. Whether or not these intimations were

necessary, we will leave the history of the subsequent corruptions of Christianity, to testify.

But even since the church ceased to be the vortex of the world's wealth, since the period ceased when it gloried to repeat the Laodicean boast, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing,"—has benevolence been one of its characteristics? The unrepealed command of Christ has been known to its members; they have had the means of carrying it extensively into effect; millions of their fellow-creatures have been passing into eternity, age after age, unsaved; but their talent, meanwhile, if not hid in a napkin, has been multiplied chiefly for their own use. Their worldly prosperity has so completely engrossed them, that they have thought it quite sufficient to attend to their own salvation, while the world around them has been left to perish.

If this be innocence, what is guilt? If this be venial negligence, what is aggravated criminality? It is a sin whose guilt exceeds all computation. Let it be supposed that at some past period in the history of Britain, news had arrived of an awful visitation of nature, by which one of her distant colonies is in a state of famine. Multitudes have

died, numbers are dying, all are approaching the point of starvation. Besides which a powerful enemy is gathering on their frontiers, and threatening to hasten the work of death. The government at home opens its stores; public charity bursts forth, and pours relief through a thousand channels. A fleet is freighted with the precious means of life, and despatched to the scene of suffering, wafted by the sighs and prayers of the nation. For a time, it steers direct for its object. But, having lost sight of land, the ardour of those employed, abates. Though engaged in a commission which angels might convoy, their impressions of its importance fade from their minds. A group of islands lies in their course, and, though far short of their destination, they decide to call. Prospects of mercantile advantage here present themselves; the spirit of gain takes possession of them; they are inclined, solicited, prevailed on, to remain. Their original object of mercy is forgotten; the stores of life with which they had been intrusted are used and bartered as if intended only for themselves; and thus an enterprise of beneficence on which God had smiled, sinks into a base mercantile adventure.

"But the supposition is impossible; if any thing in the least resembling it had ever transpired, humanity would have wept at it,—religion would have turned from the tale with horror; it would have been viewed as an ineffaceable stain on our national character at which every cheek would have blushed and burned." Impossible, in the sense supposed; but in a higher sense it has been realized, and far, far, exceeded. The world was perishing; the compassion of God was moved; the means of salvation were provided—and O! at how costly a price!—the church was charged to convey them without delay to her dying fellow-men, and to pause not in her office of mercy till the last sinner had enjoyed the means of recovery. For a time, the godlike trust was faithfully executed. "An angel flying through the midst of heaven," was an apt representation of the directness and speed with which the church prosecuted her task. Jesus beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied. Souls were snatched as brands from the burning. But a change came over her conduct. The spirit of the world returned, and cast a spell on her movements. Continents were yet to be visited, and

millions to be rescued, when she paused in her onward course. Immortal men continued to perish by nations: but the agents of mercy had abandoned their work. As if the stores of life with which they were intrusted, had been intended solely for their own use, they began to live unto themselves. An enterprise of mercy, in which God had embarked his highest glory, and which involved the happiness of the world, was arrested, and lost to myriads, by a spirit of worldly gain. For, if, at any given period after the first age of the Christian church, the professed agents of mercy had been sought for, how would the great majority of them have been found occupied and engrossed but in "buying, and selling, and getting gain?" "Each one," says Cyprian, as early as the middle of the third century,—"each one studies how to increase his patrimony, and forgetting what the faithful did in apostolic times, or what they ought always to do, their great passion is an insatiable desire of enlarging their fortunes."

This, however, is not the extent of the evil which covetousness inflicts on the cause of human happiness. It has not only rendered the majority

of professed believers useless to the church, and the church, for ages, useless to the world, but, through these, it has held the world in firmer bonds of allegiance to sin, than would otherwise have existed.

Your devotedness to the world,—we would say to the Christian mammonist,—tends, more than any of the arguments of infidelity, to confirm men in their insensibility to the claims of the gospel. That gospel found you, we will suppose, in close worldly alliance with themselves; worshippers together in the temple of mammon; running the same race for the prize of wealth; having no aims or desires but such as wealth could gratify; and, consequently, bending all your endeavours after it. Subsequently, however, you profess to have undergone a change: and, when they hear you describe the nature of that change, or hear it described for you, they hear it said that you have at length found the pearl of great price; that you have been put in possession of a good which renders you independent of all inferior things, and which enables you to look down with scorn on those objects about which you have been so eager and selfish, abandoning them to such as know no

higher good; that henceforth your treasure is in heaven, and there will your heart be also.

They hear this, and are amazed! They have not been able to detect the slightest abatement in the ardour of your worldly pursuits. They find you still among their keenest competitors in the race of wealth. What *new* object of affection you may have adopted, they know not; but they will readily acquit you of all ingratitude to your *first* love; for they can testify that your pulse does not beat less truly to its smiles and its frowns than it did when you knew no other object of regard. Whatever object you may trust *more*, they know not; but this they can witness, that, judging from your conduct, you do not trust money *less;* and, were it not that you *say* so, they would not have known that your eye was fixed on any *invisible* dependence. And when, besides this, they hear you admonished for your worldliness, and reproached with the tenacity of your grasp on wealth, and denounced for your devotion to self and your want of devotion to the cause of your new adoption, how can they be otherwise than confirmed in their opinion that your profession is hypocrisy, and all religion only a name?

And the effect is, to deepen the sleep into which they have sunk in the arms of the world.

We all know the persuasive power which the example of the martyrs and early confessors of the cross exercised on those who beheld it. Their entire dedication of their property and lives to the cause of Christ, struck at the very throne of Mammon. Numbers awoke as from a dream; for the first time suspected the omnipotence of wealth, and were seized with a noble disdain of it. They saw men advancing with the standard of a new kingdom; the sincerity of those men they could not doubt, for they beheld them in their onward course, sacrificing their worldly prospects, trampling on their wealth, and smiling on confronting death. The contagion of their example they could not resist; they fell into their train, and enrolled themselves as their fellow-subjects. But will not your opposite example, coinciding as its worldly influence does with the natural propensities of men, operate far more powerfully in detaining men from Christ? Has your conduct ever allured them to revolt from the world to Christ? Is it not more likely to seduce them *from* Christ, than to win them *to*

him? And is this thy kindness to thy friend? Has He who died for you deserved this at your hands? He intended that, by the *evident subordination of your property to him*, you should proclaim to the world your conviction of his divine superiority, and thus aim to increase the number of his subjects; whereas your evident attachment to it, tells them there is a rival interest in your heart, weakens their conviction of your religious sincerity, and thus renders your wealth subservient to the empire of Satan.

"The wicked blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth." In order that you may see the guilt of your conduct in its true light, reflect, that the inordinate love of wealth, by disparaging and forsaking the only true standard of excellence, has introduced an irreconcilable variance between the divine and the human estimate of every thing possessing a moral quality; and that you, who ought to be giving your voice for God against the world, are virtually siding with the world against him, and acquitting and applauding the man whom the Lord condemns.

The determinate influence of money, we say, appears in this—that it comes at length to erect

a new standard of judgment, to give laws, and to found an empire, in contradistinction from the divine empire. The law of God proclaims, "Thou shalt not covet;" but in the kingdom of Mammon this law is virtually repealed, and it is made lawful for all his subjects to covet, provided only they covet according to rule—submit to a few easy conventional regulations. They possess a code of their own, by which a thousand actions are made legal, and have become familiar, though at evident variance with the divine code. The authorities they plead, are such as *custom, convenience, example, utility, expedience;* "Yet their posterity approve their sayings." And their highest sanctions are, the fear of loss, and the hope of gain; for "God is not in all their thoughts." In his kingdom, the safety of the soul is placed above all other considerations; in theirs, it is treated as an impertinence, and expelled. In their language, wealth means wisdom, worth, happiness; while the explanation which he gives of it is temptation, vanity, danger. He denominates only the good man, wise; while the stedfast and admiring gaze which they fasten on the rich, proclaims that, in their estimation,

wealth is in the stead of all other recommendations, or rather an abstract of them all. And, at the very moment, when God is pronouncing the doom of the covetous, and commanding hell to enlarge itself for his reception, they, in defiance of the divine decision, are proud to catch his smiles, and to offer incense at his shrine. "The wicked blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth."

Thus, if sin has produced a revolution in this part of the divine dominions, it seems to have been the effect of wealth to give to that revolution the consolidation of a well-organized empire. Alas! how complete its arrangements, how stable and invincible its power. It has enacted new laws for human conduct, given new objects to human ambition, and new classifications to human character and society;—the whole resulting in a kingdom in which the divine authority is unacknowledged, and from which every memento of the divine presence is jealously excluded.

Now, one of the leading purposes of God in instituting a church is, that, in the midst of this awful confederation of evil, he might have a people perpetually protesting against the pre-

vailing apostacy. For this purpose, he gives them *himself*, that, by admitting them to the Fountain, he might raise them, before the eyes of the world, to an independence of the streams. And, for the same purpose, he gives them a portion of earthly property, of that common object of worldly trust, that they might have an opportunity of disparaging it before the world, by subordinating it to spiritual ends, and thus publicly vindicating the outraged supremacy of the blessed God.

How momentous the issue, then, depending on the manner in which Christians employ their property. By their visible subordination of it to God, they would be "condemning the world," and putting a lasting disgrace upon its idol; they would be distinguishing themselves from the world more effectually than by assuming the most marked badge, or by making the most ostentatious profession; they would be employing the only argument for the reality of religion which the world generally will regard, which it cannot resist, and which would serve in the stead of all other arguments. Many things there are which the world can part with, many sacrifices which it can make, in imitation of the Christian; but to "esteem the

reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt," to sacrifice wealth, is an immolation, a miracle of devotedness, which no arts of worldly enchantment can imitate. They can understand how religion may be subordinated to gain; but that gain should be sacrificed to God, is a mystery which no article in their creed, no principle in their philosophy, can explain. O, had the Christian church been true to its original design, had its members realized the purposes of its heavenly Founder, they would have chained the idol wealth to the chariot of the gospel, and have led it in triumph through the world!

But of how large a proportion of professing Christians may it be alleged, that, as far as the church was intended to answer this end, they have conspired to frustrate the design of its institution. Their property, which was meant to furnish them with the means of deprecating and denouncing the wealth-idolatry of the world, they have turned into an occasion of joining and strengthening the endangered cause of the world. Their conduct in relation to the gains of earth, which was intended to be such as to attract the notice, and awaken the inquiries, of mankind,

has been the very point on which they have symbolized with the world more cordially than on any other; standing on the same ground, pursuing the same ends, governing themselves by the same maxims. By virtually falling down before the golden image which the world has set up, they have thrown opprobrium on the voluntary poverty of Christ, obscured the distinctive spirituality of his kingdom, brought into question the very reality of his religion, and confirmed and prolonged the reign of Mammon. The man who deserts his post in the day of battle, and goes over to the enemy, is consigned by universal consent to infamy of the deepest dye; but they, by paying homage to wealth, have betrayed a cause which involves infinite results, have deserted their standard in the time of conflict, joined hands with the common foe, and thus lent themselves to reinforce and establish the dominion of sin.

SECTION VIII.

THE DOOM OF COVETOUSNESS.

If the guilt of covetousness be so enormous, can we wonder at the variety of methods by which a gracious God seeks to prevent it? or at the solemn threatenings which a holy God denounces against it? The description of the sin which we have already given, so evidently involves its condemnation, that on this part of the subject we shall be comparatively brief.

The extreme punishment which awaits the practice of covetousness may be inferred from the circumstance that the tenth command *denounces the sin in its earliest form.* Unlike the other commands which, taken literally, only prescribe for the outward conduct, this speaks to the heart. It does not merely speak to the eye, and say, *thou*

shalt not look covetously. It does not merely speak to the hand, and say, *thou shalt not grasp covetously; thou shalt not steal:* the law has said this before. But instead of waiting for the eye and the hand to do this, it goes in to the heart—"for out of the heart proceedeth covetousness"—and it says to the heart, "Thou shalt not covet." And hence saith the apostle, "I had not known the sinfulness of inordinate desire if the law had not said, Thou shalt not covet." It lays its fiery finger upon the first movement of covetousness, and brands it as a sin.

Covetousness is a sin which, more than most vices, *brings with it its own punishment.* The very objects which excite it form a rod for its chastisement. How perpetually and solicitously is God reminding us that the pursuit of these objects is attended with corroding anxiety and exhausting toil; that they are *filthy* lucre—leading through miry ways to reach them, and polluting the hand that touches them; that they are *uncertain riches* —always winged for flight*—so delusive and

* Thus the Greeks spoke of Plutus, the god of riches, as a fickle divinity; representing him as blind, to intimate that he distributes his favours indiscriminately; as lame, to denote the

unsubstantial that *they are not*, they are only the *mirage* of the world's desert: that they are unsatisfactory—"for he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase;" that the possession of them is often attended with mortification, and a separation from them with anguish; in a word, that they are dangerous and destructive, leading men "into temptation and a snare, and piercing them through with many sorrows;" and thus, in their very nature, they bring with them a part of the doom of those who covet them. Like the deadly reptile armed with a warning rattle, they are so constituted as to apprize us of the danger of too close an approach. They all seem to say as we put forth our hand to take them, "Do not covet me, do not take me to your heart, or I shall certainly disappoint, and injure, if not ruin you." Were all the property which has ever passed through the hands of men still in existence, and could we hear it relate the history of those who have possessed it, what tales of toil, anxiety, and guilt, of heartless treachery, and fiendish circumvention, of

slowness with which he approaches; and winged, to imply the velocity with which he flies away.

consciences seared, and souls lost, and hell begun on this side death, would it have to unfold! Might we not well recoil from it, and exclaim, "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me—give us this day our daily bread."

But in addition to the punishment which the sin involves in its own nature, *God has often visited it with a positive infliction.* Instances of this fact have already passed in review before us. Whether we advert to the losses and sufferings of Lot, the stoning of Achan, the leprosy of Gehazi, or the fate of Judas, the secret of their punishment is explained when the Almighty declares, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him." And what do we behold in every such infliction but an earnest of its coming doom? the scintillations of that wrath, the flashes of that distant fire which is kindled already to consume it?

And not only *has* he punished it; *he is visiting and denouncing it at the present moment.* "Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil! Thou

hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it." The very house which he has built for his security shall reproach him for the grasping injustice of the means by which it was reared. Mysterious voices from every part of it shall upbraid and threaten him, for having pursued the gains of this world to the neglect of his immortal soul. It shall be haunted by the fearful spectre of his own guilty conscience; it shall be the prison-house of justice till he is called to the bar of God; instead of defending him from evil, it shall seem to attract and receive all dreadful things to alarm and punish him. The law of God is still *in the act* of condemning covetousness. The fires of Sinai, indeed, have ceased to burn, and its thunders have ceased to utter their voices, but that law, in honour of which these terrors appeared, is in force still; that law which said, "Thou shalt not covet," is burning and thundering against covetousness still. It has been republished under the gospel with additional sanctions; it is written by the finger of the Spirit

on the fleshly tables of every renewed heart; it is inscribed by Providence on every object of human desire, to warn us of danger as often as our eye rests on them. And if, heedless of that warning, we yet pursue those objects to excess, and put forth our hand to take them—if then the terrors of another Sinai do not kindle and flash forth upon us, it is not that the law has lost its force, but that it is reserving itself for another day. Lost its force!—It is at this moment making inquisition in every human heart, and if there be but one feeling of inordinate worldly desire there, it takes cognizance of it, and denounces against it the wrath of God. Lost its force! It is daily following the covetous through the world, tracking them through all the windings of their devious course, *chasing them out of the world*, pursuing them down to their own place, and kindling around them there fires such as Sinai never saw.

"The wicked blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth." Not only does the law condemn him, *but God abhors him:* and how hateful must that sin be which, in any sense, compels the God of mercy to hate the creatures which he himself has made, to loathe the work of his own hands!

Yet covetousness does this. And it is important to remark that the covetousness against which the Scriptures launch their most terrible anathemas is not of the *scandalous* kind, but such as may escape the censures of the church, and even receive the commendations of the world; leaving us to draw the inevitable conclusion, that if the milder forms of the sin be punished, its grosser degrees have every thing to fear. Here, for example, is a covetous man of whom the wicked *speak well*—a proof that he is not rapacious or avaricious, for a person of such a stamp is commended by none—and yet God abhors him. And who can conceive the misery of being abhorred by the blessed God! How large a proportion of the suffering which the world at present contains might be traced to God's detestation of this sin: and, probably, since the guilt of the sin goes on rapidly increasing with every passing year, the punishment of it in this world will go on increasing also. How large a proportion of the misery of hell at this moment, points to this sin as its origin! And how rapidly, it is to be feared, does that numerous class of the lost go on augmenting, of which the rich man in the parable forms the appalling type!

But, "behold, another woe cometh!" Another seal is yet to be opened, and *Death* will be seen, *with Hell following him.* It is of one of the classes of the covetous especially that the apostle Peter declares, "their judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."—The angel charged with their destruction is on the wing, and is hourly drawing nearer. And the apostle James, addressing the covetous of his day, exclaimed, in reference to the approaching destruction of the Jewish state, "Come now, ye rich men, weep and howl over the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are cankered, and their rust shall be a witness against you, and shall eat into your flesh as fire: ye have laid up treasures for the last days." But if temporal calamities called for such an intense agony of grief, such a convocation of tears, and groans, and lamentations, where is the form of sorrow equal to the doom which awaits the covetous in the last day!—where are the tears fit to be shed in that hour when the tarnish of that gold and silver which ought to have been kept bright by a generous circulation, shall testify

against them, and, like caustic, shall corrode and burn them!—and when, however much they may have suffered for their covetousness on earth, they shall find that they were only receiving the *interest* of the wrath they had laid up, that the *principal* has gone on daily accumulating; that they have been treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, till the dreadful store has overflowed.

The covetous will then find themselves placed "on the left hand of the Judge." And he will say unto them, "I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." Then practical benevolence, as the result of evangelical piety, is the hinge on which our final destiny will turn! This language contains a rule of judgment which, in the hands of Christ, is capable of receiving universal application. It obviously implies that he has a cause in the world—the cause of human salvation; and that all who do not practically attach themselves to it, deny themselves on account of it, love those who belong to it, and supremely value him who is

the Divine Author of it, will be finally disowned and condemned.

And here again it is important to remark, that the covetousness which is threatened to be placed at the left hand of the Judge, is not of the *scandalous* kind. Had not the Judge himself described it, we might have supposed that this fearful position would be occupied only by the outlaws of humanity, monsters of rapacity, avarice, and injustice. But no. The fig-tree was withered, not for bearing bad fruit, but for yielding no fruit. The foolish virgins were excluded from the marriage-feast, not for casting away their lamps, but for not using them. The unprofitable servant was cast into outer darkness, not for wasting the talent committed to him, but for not employing it. The worldling whom our Lord denominates a *fool* is not charged with any positive sins: for aught that appears, he had been honest and industrious; his diligence had been crowned with success, and he proposed to enjoy that success in retirement and ease;—and what is this but an every-day history? or where is the man that does not commend him, and take him for a model? But he had "laid up treasures" only

"for himself, and was not rich towards God;" and therefore is he summoned suddenly to appear as a guilty criminal at the bar of God. And they who do not now learn the moral of his history—"to take heed and beware of covetousness"—are here represented as finally sharing his doom. They may have been as free as the reader from all the grosser vices. They may have had many negative virtues, like him, and have often boasted that they do no harm. But the ground of their condemnation will be, that they did no good. They may have occasionally exercised that empty benevolence which costs neither effort nor sacrifice. But they practised no self-denial, made no retrenchments, took no pains, in the cause of mercy. They never once thought of adopting and espousing that cause as an object in which they were interested, and which looked to them for support. Had it been left entirely to them, it would have been famished with hunger, have pined in sickness, have been immured in a prison, and have perished from the world. Most justly, therefore, will they find themselves placed on the left hand of the Judge.

In that fearful situation *the covetous man will be*

an object of wonder and aversion to all the righteous. "The righteous shall see, and shall laugh at him: Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches." In a popular sense, he may have been moral, and even generous; but he had "made gold his hope, and had said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence." His wealth had been his strong tower, but that tower shall attract the bolt of Heaven. His very armour shall draw the lightning down. The exposure of his trust shall excite the scorn and derision of the universe. "Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place." That he should have thought to extract happiness from a clod of earth; that he should have reckoned a little gold an equivalent for God; that a rational and immortal being should have been guilty of such an enormity, will suspend all pity in the minds of the righteous. The unhappy being will behold every finger pointed at him in scorn; will hear himself mocked at as a prodigy of folly; will be scoffed and chased beyond the limits of God's happy dominions.

"He shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

In the classifications of this world, the Christian mammonist may stand among the holy and excellent of the earth: but in the final arrangements of the judgment-day, he will have a new place assigned him. As soon as his character becomes known, the righteous will no longer be burdened and disgraced with his presence; they will cast him forth as an alien from their community; "he shall not inherit the kingdom of God." And the very same act which removes him from their community, shall transfer him "to his own place"—to the congenial society of the drunkard, the unbeliever, the idolater, and of all who, like himself, made not God their trust. "Know ye not," saith the apostle, that this is the divine determination? It is no new arrangement, no recent enactment of the Supreme Lawgiver, arising from a view of the exigency of the case; it is the operation of a *known* law, eternal and immutable as his own nature;—"He shall not inherit the kingdom of God." The lax opinions of the church on the sin of covetousness may delude him with the hope that he *shall*, that cupidity alone shall not exclude him from the divine presence; but "let no man de-

ceive you with vain words," saith the apostle; the decree has gone forth against every covetous man, whatever his standing may be in the Christian church,—"He shall not have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." The splendours of a worldly kingdom he may inherit; streams of worldly affluence may seem to seek him, and, like a sea, he may receive them all; but he gives not God the glory, he makes himself no heavenly friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, he thinks not of transferring his treasures by deeds of beneficence to the hands of God, and, consequently, when he passes out of time into eternity, though he should be sought for before the throne of God above, sought for diligently among all the ranks of the blessed, he would no where be found, for, "he shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

The final destination of the covetous is hell. Having convicted them of their guilt, the Judge will say to them, in common with all the other classes of the ungodly, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And then will they behold their covetousness in its true light. They will see that it

involved an attempt to erect another centre than God, in which they might find happiness and repose; and, therefore, when he shall place himself as in the centre of his people, and say to them, "Come," the covetous will feel the rectitude of the sentence which shall command them to "depart." They will then discover that, in withholding their property from benevolent objects, they were withholding it, in effect, from him; and, therefore, they shall acknowledge the justice of his withholding himself from them. They belong to a schism, compared with which every other is unworthy of the name—the great schism of the selfish. Though professing to belong to that vast spiritual community in heaven and earth, of which Christ is the supreme Head, they will then discover that, in reality, they have attached themselves to the great party of the world, adopting its symbols, governing themselves by its maxims, and pursuing its ends; and, therefore, with it they must "depart." And then first will they estimate truly the dreadful nature of their doom. For when he shall say, "Depart," every thing else—every being, every place in the universe, but hell—shall repeat, "Depart;" casting

them forth, disowning them, and refusing them sympathy and refuge. "The heaven shall reveal their iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against them." "They shall go away into everlasting punishment."

SECTION IX.

EXCUSES OF COVETOUSNESS FOR ITS WANT OF LIBERALITY.

In his solemn description of the general judgment, our Lord represents the ungodly as startled at the true picture of their own selfishness. Never having reflected on their conduct in its religious bearings, and ultimate effects, they cannot allow that the charge alleged by the Judge can have any application to them. They hasten, therefore, to put in their pleas in arrest of judgment, to stay their doom. In like manner, on surveying the magnitude of the evils arising to religion from a covetous spirit, the first impression of a person implicated, may probably be of the nature of a remonstrance which may be interpreted thus:—*If* I am chargeable with cupidity,

the degree in which I indulge the passion can surely bear no relation whatever to evils so enormous, and consequences so dreadful. *I have often given* to the claims of benevolence; I am in the habit of contributing *as others do;* I consider that I am benefiting the community as much, if not more, by spending than by giving; I give *as much as I conveniently can; had I more* to bestow, I would certainly give it; and *I intend to remember the cause of God in the final arrangements of my property;* so that whoever may merit these strictures on covetousness, they can only apply to me, if at all, in the most mitigated sense.

The plausible air which this remonstrance wears requires that it should receive examination. You *have given,* you say, to the cause of Christian philanthropy. But, it may be inquired, *when* have you given? Has it been *only* when your sensibility has been taken by surprise? or when a powerful appeal has urged you to the duty? or when the example, or the presence, of others, has left you no alternative? or when the prospect of being published as a donor tempted your ostentation? or when importunity annoyed you? or when under the passing influence of a fit of generosity? We

would not too curiously analyze the composition of any apparent virtue: nor would we have you to suspend the practice of charity till you can be perfectly certain that your motives are unmixed. But we would affectionately remind you that if you have given to God *at such times only*, it proves to a demonstration that you are covetous at all other times. Your covetousness is a habit, your benevolence only an act; or, rather, it is only the momentary suspension of your prevailing habit; and, as the circumstance that a man enjoys lucid intervals does not exempt him from being classed among the insane, so your accidental and occasional charities still leave you in the ranks of the covetous.

But as you plead that you *have given*, it may be inquired further—*what* have you given? The mere circumstance of a Christian professor devoting a part of his property to God does not denominate him benevolent; otherwise Ananias must be honoured with the epithet; and yet it was his covetousness which involved him in falsehood, and his falsehood drew down destruction. "There is that withholdeth more than is meet:" if men were to be denominated by that which characterizes

them in the sight of God, how many an individual who is now called benevolent on account of what he gives, would be stigmatized as covetous on account of what he withholds. Which can more properly be said of you, that you have *given*, or that you have *withheld?* Would you not feel degraded and displeased to hear others reporting of you that, slender as your contribution is, it is all you *can* give? Numbers profess to give their *mite;* by which, though they may not confess it to themselves, they *feel* as if they had in some way approached the example of the widow, if not actually entitled themselves to a share of her praise. While, in fact, there is this immense distinction, that whereas she cast into the treasury only two mites because it was her *all,* they cast in only a mite in order that they may keep *their* all. They pay this insignificant fraction in tribute to a clamorous conscience, in order that they may buy off the great bulk of their wealth, and quietly consume it on their selfishness. Her greatness of soul, her magnanimous benevolence, held the Saviour of the world in admiration, and drew from him words of complacency and delight. Their pretended imitation of her conduct is an insult to

her munificence, and to the praise which the benevolent Jesus bestowed on it. And yet to which of these two classes of donors do you approach the nearest? Benevolence, you are aware, is comparative: there are some who have given their all to God, and there are those who may almost be said to keep their all to themselves,—to which of these two descriptions do you bear the greater resemblance? The tree is known by its fruits; now it might not be an unprofitable exercise for you to examine whether you are prepared to rest your claims to the Christian character on the *proportion* in which you have borne the fruits of Christian benevolence.

A second plea is, that you believe you are in the habit of contributing to the cause of mercy *as others do.* But have you—a Christian friend might inquire—have you ever reflected whether or not others have adopted the right standard of benevolence? The amount of property devoted by the Christian public to God is annually increasing: does not that imply that Christians, at present, are only approaching the proper standard of liberality, rather than that they have already reached it. And would it not be noble, would it

not be godlike in you were you to reach that standard before them? were you to take your rule immediately from the cross itself, rather than from the example of those who, it is to be feared, are standing from it afar off.

Christians, in the present day, seem to have entered into a kind of tacit compact, that to give certain sums to certain objects shall be deemed benevolent: the consequence of which is, that, though most of them are contributing less than "of the ability which God giveth," they yet never suspect their claim to be deemed liberal. And another consequence is, that when a Christian distinguishes himself, and stands out from the ranks of the church, by a noble deed of liberality, though constrained to admire him, they do not consider themselves called on to imitate; for they feel as if he had exceeded the *rules*, passed the prescribed limits, of benevolence.

We have supposed that you not only plead the example of others, but that you are also ready to add, "I contribute *as much as I conveniently can.*" Here, however, two questions instantly arise; first, whether you mean that you devote to God as much of your property as is convenient to

your luxury, or convenient to your bare personal comfort? And, secondly, whether what is generally understood by personal convenience, is precisely the kind of arbitrator to which a Christian can safely refer the amount of his charity?

When you say that you contribute as much as you conveniently can, we presume your meaning to be that you devote to benevolent uses all that your present rate of expenditure happens to leave unappropriated to other objects. But here again two questions arise: if your expenditure is calculated and reduced to a plan, ought not the question, *how much shall I devote to God?* to have made an original part of that plan? But since you confess that grave omission, ought you not now to think of retrenching your expenses, and reducing your plan, that your charity may not be left to the mercy of an expensive and selfish convenience? Do you not know that all the great works of the Christian church have been performed by sacrificing your favourite principle *convenience?* that a Crœsus himself might find it *convenient* to give but little in charity? and an Apicius to give nothing? and that if the men who, in all ages, have been most distinguished for

extending the kingdom of Christ had listened to the dictates of *convenience*, they would have lived and died in inglorious and guilty indolence? And need you be reminded, how easily God could convince you, by simply reducing your present income, that you *might* have made it convenient to contribute to his cause more than you now do, by the exact amount of that reduction? And do you not see, that your unfaithfulness to your present trust, may operate with God to forbid your further prosperity? for is it not a law of his kingdom that the misimproved talent shall be *withdrawn* from the possessor, rather than *increased?* Besides which, you are closing your eyes to eternal consequences; for "he that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly." The husbandman who should grieve that he had land to sow, and begrudged the seed which he sowed in it as lost, would be wise and innocent compared with the man who, while professing to believe that his charity is seed sown for an eternal harvest, should yet stint and limit his gifts to the precarious leavings of an improvident convenience.

Or, you may be ready to plead, "I consider myself not only justified in my present style of

living, but as benefiting the community by spending a portion of my property in luxuries, more than by giving that portion of it away in alms; besides, by so expending it, I am employing and supporting the very classes who subscribe to and principally sustain the cause of Christian charity."

To such a statement we can only reply, generally, that your scale of expenditure must depend, partly, on the rank you hold in society; that to arbitrate correctly between the claims of self and the cause of mercy, is the great problem of Christian benevolence; and that *if you have* solved this problem scripturally and conscientiously before God, it is not for man to sit in judgment on your conduct.

But if you have *not*—if the question still remain open for consideration, your attention is earnestly solicited to three classes of remark—economical, logical, and religious.

When you speak of benefiting the community by spending, more than by giving, you are, in effect, raising a question in political economy. Now, to this it may be replied, that the Christian liberality to which you are urged is not that

indiscriminate alms-giving which would encourage idleness and improvidence. The introduction of such an idea is quite beside the question in hand. The charity which you are called on to exercise is such as would leave the whole apparatus of useful production untouched; or which would touch it only to render it more effective and beneficial—a charity which should at once discourage vice; assist the helpless, destitute, and diseased; reclaim and reform the vicious; civilize barbarism; call into activity the physical, mental, and moral resources of savage lands; excite and reward industry; instruct the ignorant; circulate the word of God; send the agents of the Christian church in all directions; and which should thus furnish employment for multitudes, give a direction to the energies of men which should bear fruit for both worlds, modify and raise the tone of political economy itself, and thus be the means of lifting earth nearer heaven.

And then, as to the value of labour and wealth, you have to consider that the labour which is beneficial to the individual, may be quite unprofitable to the country, and, in the end, injurious, and even ruinous: otherwise, war, or the mul-

tiplication of gaming-houses and gin-palaces, by giving employment to numbers, must be hailed as a blessing; instead of which, it might easily be shown that, in a variety of ways, they operate *economically* as a curse. You have to consider also, that it is not the mere increase of a nation's wealth which enhances its permanent prosperity; otherwise, the colonial mines of Spain would be still her boast and glory, instead of accounting, as they unquestionably do, for her national poverty. And the question is, whether much of your outlay, though it may encourage labour, and increase the present wealth of the nation, has not, when viewed as a part of a great and slowly developed system, a tendency to generate many of the evils which the Economical science deplores, of shortening the intervals between what are called the *periodical crashes*, and of proving in the end a national bane, and not a blessing.

We might, indeed, by taking advantage of a distinction which obtains in political economy between *productive and unproductive* consumption, undertake to show, that by expending your revenue on the superfluities of life you are consuming it *unproductively*, that is, in a way which does

not add to the annual quantity or value of the national produce; and that you are thus comparatively sinking and absorbing in self-indulgence that which might have augmented the national wealth, and have made you a greater national blessing. So that, though we do not say that the science blames you, yet the praise which it accords to you is but secondary and qualified.

But not only is not an unnecessary expenditure productive of the good you imagine, it is attended with positive evils. For, in order to support it, a proprietor of land, for instance, must raise his rents; in order to pay these, the farmer must raise the price of his produce; and in order to purchase that, the labourer must receive increased wages; and the consequence is, that that large number of the human family whose means of subsistence are precarious, experience an increased difficulty in obtaining even this scanty supply. Besides which, a useless consumption, by keeping up a high scale of expenditure, and engrossing the time of the producer, prevents leisure, and thus retards mental cultivation, and real improvement.

Again; employing the term *logical* in the

humblest sense, and for the sake of distinction, it may be inquired—if there be really so much benefit as you suppose accruing to the community from what you spend on superfluities, would you not be justified in spending more upon them? Ought it not to become a serious question with you, whether or not you are spending enough upon them? whether it be not your *duty* to spend all you can upon them? to withdraw even that small modicum which you now dispense in charity, and to devote *that* also to "the pride of life?" But from such a conclusion you recoil with dismay; though it seems only the legitimate application of your own principle. You add also, that the money which you expend in luxury actually employs the very classes who subscribe to, and principally support, the cause of Christian charity. As far as you are concerned, remember, this is purely accidental. Whatever credit may be due to them for thus consecrating the fruit of their labour to God, not a particle of that credit can properly accrue to you. Besides, if they do right in thus taking their property to God, are not you doing wrong in taking your property from him? and will not their conduct be cited

against you in condemnation? To be consistent with yourself, you must actually condemn them for appropriating so much of their property to God. On your principle, they are essentially wrong for not indulging more in superfluities. For if your self-indulgence, in this respect, works so beneficially for the general good, would not their self-indulgence work equally well? From this conclusion, also, you probably recoil, though it seems only the legitimate application of your own principle.

But, as a professed follower of Christ, you will surely prefer to decide the question on religious grounds; aware, as you are, that whatever is morally wrong cannot be politically right. Now you profess freely to admit that the claims of Christian charity should be supported; the only question with you is, whether you are not doing more good by spending what you do in luxury, than by dispensing it all in charity. But let me ask you, as under the eye of Omniscience—is your ruling motive in this lavish expenditure a sincere desire to benefit the community? or are you not actuated rather by a love of self-gratification? Because, if so, it would be well for you to

remember that, though God may overrule your evil for good—though your profusion, as a matter of political economy, should be proved to work well, and to be worthy of praise, yet, as a question of morality, bearing on your eternal state, it may endanger your safety, and aggravate your condemnation. If it be true that your eternal welfare depends on the ascendancy which the spiritual may now gain over the sensible—and that every additional worldly indulgence is so much advantage given to the flesh over the spirit, are you not, by your profusion, endangering your own everlasting peace for the sake of uncertainly promoting the temporal welfare of others? and is not this a most romantic mode of self-immolation? a loving of your neighbour, not merely as yourself, but enthusiastically more, and infinitely better, than yourself? In addition to which, your profusion deprives you of the power of performing any *great* acts of liberality. It invites the classes below you to aspire to an imitation of your style of living. It provokes that fierce and ruinous competition of fashion so generally complained of, and which you yourself, perhaps, loudly deprecate; and it gives the ene-

mies of religion occasion to triumph, and to say, in the language of one of our leading Reviews, "The godly testify no reluctance to follow the footsteps of the worldly, in the way to wealth. They quietly and fearlessly repose amidst the many luxuries it enables them to procure. We see their houses furnished in every way to gratify the lust of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life; and their tables covered with the same luxurious viands that are in ordinary use with the men of the world. This self-indulgence, and worldly conformity, and vain glory, although at variance with the spirit and principles of the gospel, seem to find just as much favour in their eyes as with other people."

"But had I more wealth to bestow, I would cheerfully give it." "Be not deceived." Certain as you suppose that fact to be, your conduct at present proves that it is the greatest of all uncertainties; or rather, the certainty is all on the side of your continued covetousness. Riches were never yet known to cure a selfish extravagance, or to remedy the love of riches. As well might a vintage be expected to allay the thirst of a fever produced by wine. "He that loveth silver shall

not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase."

Nec Crœsi fortuna unquam, nec Persica Regna
Sufficient animo——

The cure you need consists, not in the increase of your wealth, but in the reduction of your desires, and the conscientious management of your present income, as a faithful servant of Jesus Christ. Till this be effected, the augmentation of your property a thousand-fold would not increase your benevolence, and when it is effected, the reduction of your property to two mites would not be able to rob you of the pure satisfaction of casting them into his treasury.

Agur declined the abundance to which you aspire as a perilous condition; and the individual who professes to desire opulence only for the sake of having more to bestow, and who makes that desire an excuse for giving nothing at present, gives ground to fear that his desire is only a pretext for indulging covetousness under the mask of religion. But you are not to wait till you have reached what you deem the best possible state for the exercise of benevolence. The charity required

at your hands at present, is only such as your limited resources will allow; *three* mites are not expected from him who has only two. And the more nearly your circumstances approach to a state of poverty, the greater the opportunity you possess for evincing the noble generosity and force of the Christian principle. It was not the splendid donations of the rich which drew forth the praises of the Son of God, but the more than royal munificence of that indigent widow who gave "all that she had, even all her living." The darker the midnight sky, the more bright and glorious do the stars appear, and the more loudly do the heavens declare the glory of God. And when the Apostle would excite our admiration by the wonders of the Christian church, he tells us of "the churches of Macedonia, how that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality."

Or, perhaps, you belong to those who triumph in their own mind over every charge of cupidity, by remembering that they have made arrangements to be *charitable at death.* A *life* of benevolence ending in a munificent bequest, is like a

glorious sunset to a summer's day; but no posthumous charity can justify a life of avarice, or redeem it from infamy. To defer religion till your last hour is guilt of the deepest dye; can it be innocent, then, to defer the practice of one of its most important relative duties till the same crisis arrives? Were you to direct that a splendid *asylum* should arise over your dust, it would still be the monument of a covetous man; and on its front might be written, as an appropriate inscription, "The triumph of death over avarice." For he who withholds his hand from deeds of benevolence till his last hour, surrenders his property to death, rather than devotes it to God.

Besides, you are acting in direct opposition to the settled arrangements of Providence; and to the most distinct intimations of the divine will. Your charity, as it is to be future, is made to depend on the most contingent circumstances. "I had got in all my life," saith Baxter, "the just sum of a thousand pounds. Having no child, I devoted it to charity. Before my purpose was accomplished, the King caused his exchequer to be shut, and it was lost: which I mention to counsel any man that would do good, to do it speedily, and

with all his might." But by making your charity to consist only in testamentary bequests, you are calculating on the certainty and stability of that, which has become the very emblem of change and uncertainty.

What you are proposing to defer till the period of your natural death, the Christian, if he acts in harmony with his profession, feels himself bound to do when he dies unto sin; *then* he devotes himself and his property to God; and with this immense advantage over you, that he will be his own executor; that he will enjoy the godlike satisfaction of doing, himself, for God, what you will leave to be done by others. You profess to regard yourself only as the steward of your property, and God as its supreme Proprietor; but instead of employing it for his glory, and rendering to him a *periodical* account of your stewardship, your covetousness makes it necessary that death should deprive you of your office, in order that the property you hold may not lie useless for ever. Your Lord admonishes you to make to yourself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when you fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations; but however welcome the

arrival, and cheering the reception, of the benevolent Christian in heaven, it is evident that no such a greeting can be there awaiting you: the only signs of joy your spirit will meet with, will be occasioned by the liberation of your property by the hand of death, and, as such, they will wear the aspect of upbraiding and reproach. And when your Lord shall come to receive his own with usury, instead of being able to refer to the multiplication of the talents with which he intrusted you, *that* multiplication will have yet to commence, for your talents will only just then have emerged into the light; you will have drawn on yourself the doom of the unprofitable servant. You are reversing that divine arrangement which would have caused your death to be deprecated as a loss, and you are voluntarily classing yourself with the refuse of society whose death is regarded as a gain: those who might have prayed for your continuance on earth as a benefit to the church, are, for that very reason, tempted rather to desire your departure. Were your conduct to be generally adopted, what loss would the cause of Christ sustain by the death of half the Christian world? so completely is that conduct at variance with

the divine arrangements, that such a bereavement, which we cannot contemplate now without horror, would in such a case become indispensable to the continuance of his cause upon earth.

But another question remains: having shown that dying charity is a miserable substitute for living benevolence; it is now important to inquire what the amount of your charitable bequests may be.* We are aware that this question of proportion is one entirely between you and God; and one which must be regulated by circumstances of which you are to be *supposed* the best judge. In the great majority of instances, however, the portion of a testator's property which ought to be set apart for benevolent purposes is more clear to any disinterested, consistent Christian, than it is to the testator himself.

Have you not reason to suspect that such is the fact in relation to yourself? Does not your present parsimony towards the objects of Christian

* The writer would take the liberty of recommending an excellent little work, called "Testamentary Counsels," published by Ward and Co.; containing much on the subject of charitable bequests, that is entitled to the serious attention of the Christian reader.

benevolence justify the fear that the amount which you have devised for such purposes is most disproportionately small? And yet, small as it is, it is your WILL. In discharging your testamentary duties, you naturally remember those persons and objects which hold the dearest place in your affections:—your supreme friend is Christ, and yet, that he should be put off with that insulting pittance is, *your* WILL. You make your testamentary arrangements in the prospect of leaving, what you properly designate, a world of misery; much more of your property might be left to the alleviation of that misery, but that it should not be so appropriated is your WILL. You make those arrangements in the prospect of being received into perfect blessedness: you entertain the hope that while survivors are inspecting, for the first time, the distribution which you have made of your property, your emancipated spirit will be enjoying the happiness of the just made perfect—but that next to none of that happiness shall arise from the right employment of that property is your WILL.

This robbery of the Christian cause, remember, is your *will;*—not a mere passing thought, not

a precipitate, unconsidered act; but an act which you formally preface with saying, that you perform it "being in sound mind,"—in a word, it is the deliberate act of that sovereign part of your nature, your WILL. After having defrauded the cause of Christ of your property during life, you take the most effective measures to perpetuate the fraud after death; and you do this with the full consent of all the powers of your mind, you impress it with the sovereign seal of your WILL. Yes, this is your *will*, which you are content to have for a dying pillow, and on which you propose to rest your dying head! Your *will*—and therefore a part of your *preparation for death!* Your *will*—avowedly prepared, (monstrous inconsistency!) that the subject of your property *may not disturb you in death!* that you may be able to think of it *with peace!* Your *will*—made, partly, as a preparation for the awful moment when it shall be said to you, "Give an account of thy stewardship;" made on the way to that judgment-seat, where one of the first inquiries will relate to the use which you have made of your various talents! Christian professor, be entreated. What your death-bed would have been

had your attention never been called to this subject, it is not for man to surmise; but should you allow your will to remain unaltered now that your conscience has been admonished, do not wonder if you find your dying pillow to be filled with thorns. Retrieve, at once, your guilty error, by augmenting your bequests to the cause of mercy: or, better still, become your own executor, and enjoy at once the luxury of doing good; or, last of all, do both—if the nature of your property permit, *do both.*

It is impossible to look at the existing state of the finance of the Redeemer's empire, without perceiving that *the entire system of Christian charity requires revision.* Here and there an individual is to be found, who appears to be economizing his resources and employing them for God: but the very admiration in which such an one is held in his circle, implies, that he stands there alone. The light of a Reynolds, a Thornton, a Broadley Wilson, an unostentatious L——, shines so conspicuously on account of the surrounding darkness. In every section of the Christian church, a spirit of self-denying benevolence is the exception, and a spirit of worldly self-in-

dulgence, which leaves little for God, is the rule. Nor can a thoughtful Christian reflect on the growing necessities of the kingdom of Christ, and the imploring attitude of the heathen world, and then remember how insignificant a proportion of the vast pecuniary resources of the Christian church is at present appropriated to the demands of that kingdom and the salvation of that world, to say nothing of the difficulty with which even that little is obtained, without feeling that among the revolutions which must precede the universal reign of Christ, one must be, *a revolution in the economy of Christian benevolence.*

It is a subject deserving the most serious consideration of the Christian church,—how much its comparative want of success in attempting to enlarge the empire of Christ, is to be ascribed to its prevailing covetousness. How incalculably greater the success of the Christian enterprise might have been, had we only acted up to our conviction of Christian liberality! What could have stood before a spirit which evinced a readiness to give up all for Christ? The world would have beheld in such conduct an argument for the reality and power of the gospel which it could

not misunderstand, could not gainsay. "God, even our own God, would have blessed us"—would have gloried to own such a people, and to have distinguished us with his blessing before the eyes of the world—"God would have blessed us;" and, as a consequence, "all the ends of the earth would have feared him."

What would have been the history of the primitive Christians, had they been cursed with the love of money as the Christians of the present day are! Taking into the account their deep poverty, and the absence of all the present facilities for prosecuting their aggressive designs, a very small circle would have bounded the extent of their labours, and a single page have sufficed for the history of their exploits. But feeling the momentous nature of the object in which they were embarked, that the salvation or perdition of the world depended instrumentally on their conduct, they laid aside every weight, cast their all into the treasury of benevolence, and held themselves free and ready to do their Lord's behests,—and he caused them to triumph in every place.

We are professedly treading in their steps.

We have received from them the standard of the cross, and are carrying it forwards against the common foe. But, though avowedly warring with the world, have we not taken a wedge of gold, and hidden it in the camp. If the presence of one Achan was sufficient to account for the discomfiture of Israel, can we be surprised at the limited nature of our success, when every tribe of our Christian Israel has its Achan, and almost every tent its "accursed thing?" Has not the cupidity of Christians made the very profession of disinterested benevolence to be laughed at by the world, and to be suspected even among themselves? Have not deeds of self-sacrificing liberality, such as would have been looked on in the primitive church as matters of course, become so rare among Christians, that the man who should perform them now, if he did not actually endanger his reputation, would at least incur the suspicions of a large proportion of his fellow-professors? The spirit of primitive liberality has so far departed from the church, that they would eye him with an astonishment which would prove that, if sympathy be necessary to comprehend his conduct, they must remain

in guilty ignorance. Is there not reason to conclude, that many a noble offering has been lost to the cause of Christ, and many an incipient impulse of benevolence repressed, through a dread of that singularity which it might seem to affect as viewed by a selfish eye? One great reason, it has been said, why men practise generosity so little, is, because there are so few generous persons to stimulate others by their example; and because, it might have been added, they dreaded the charge of singularity, or ostentation, to which their liberality would have exposed them. And if many a *human* gift has been lost to the cause of Christ owing to this repulsive spirit of cupidity, can we wonder if it has deprived the church of many a *divine* blessing which would otherwise have been showered on it? The church has indulged in a selfish and contracted spirit, until it has gone far to disqualify itself for receiving great things either from God or man.

And, in the same way, the church has incapacitated itself for *achieving* great things. There is no necessity for supposing an arbitrary withholdment of the divine blessing, or the existence

of a judicial sentence, in order to account for its limited usefulness. Indeed, the measure of success which has crowned its endeavours, would discountenance such an idea; for that success has been granted to the full amount of its labours. It is the limitation of its labours and sacrifices alone, which has restricted its usefulness; and the reason of that restriction is to be found in its selfishness. What Bacon says of the influence of riches on virtue, may be adapted and applied, in the most extensive sense, to their influence on the spirit of the Christian enterprise. They have proved the baggage, the *impedimenta*, of the Christian army; for as the baggage is to an army, so is wealth to the Christian enterprise, it hindereth the march, and the care of it sometimes loseth or disturbeth the victory.

And the variety of ways in which it operates to this effect, might supply us with an answer to those who may fancy that we are ascribing too much to the influence of wealth, and overlooking other important considerations. It is precisely owing to its influence on those other important things — especially, on the spirit of prayer, and on Christian self-dedication—that the

love of the world acquires its potency of evil. Prayer is its appointed antidote: but it keeps the Christian from the closet, or else divides his heart with God while there. And as to his high office of appearing before God as a suppliant for the world, an earnest intercessor for his race, it barely allows him time to pray for himself. A clear and steady view of the cross would heal the malady, would cause his heart to swell with the lofty emotion that he is not his own, and impel him to lay himself out for that blessed Saviour whose property he is; but the malady itself prevents him from beholding the remedy. As if an Israelite had been *so* wounded as to be unable to see the brazen serpent erected for his cure, the spirit of selfishness has partially blinded the Christian to the sight of the cross. It only allows him to see it as in a mist; and so completely does it engross his time, and drive him hither and thither in its service, that he seldom looks at the cross sufficiently long either to see its glory or to feel its power. And might we not appeal to a large number of Christian professors, whether during those rare moments when they have caught a glimpse of that self-dedication

to Christ which he claims at their hands, a perception at the same time of the sacrifices and self-denial to which that consecration of themselves would necessarily lead, has not been sufficient to make that sight of his claims unwelcome, and induced them to turn their attention in another direction? Thus the spirit we are deprecating, proves itself to be still entitled to the bad pre-eminence assigned to it by the apostle —it is "the root of all evil." Like the drunkenness which the Demon is said to have chosen for his victim, because he knew it would lead to other sins, it is a kind of moral intoxication which never exists alone; it not only robs the cause of Christ of the liberality of his followers, but also of their prayers, and cordial dedication.

But at the same time that this spirit disqualifies his people for extensive usefulness, it places the great Head of the church himself under a *moral* restraint from employing and blessing them. A covetous community!—how can he consistently employ such to convert the world; especially, too, as that conversion includes a turning from covetousness! Not, indeed, that his cause is *necessarily* dependent for success on our liberality: and,

perhaps, when his people shall be so far constrained by his love as to place their property at his disposal, he may most convincingly show them that he has never been dependent on it, by completing his kingdom without it. But while he chooses to work by means, those means must be in harmony with his own character—and what is that but the very antithesis of selfishness, *infinite benevolence?* He regulates those means by laws: and one of those laws is, that "from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath;" that he not only will not employ the covetous, but will deprive him of that which he guiltily withholds from his service.

We pray for the coming of the kingdom of Christ; and wonder, at times, that our heartless, disunited, inconsistent prayers are not more successful. But what do we expect? Let it be supposed that a convocation of all the Christians upon earth should be held, to implore the conversion of the world. How justly might an ancient prophet be sent from God to rebuke them, and say, "The means for the conversion of the world are already in your hands. Had you been dependent on

human charity for support, you might have then expected to see your Almighty Lord erect his kingdom by miracle; or you might have warrantably come to his throne to implore the means necessary for carrying it on by your own instrumentality. But these means are actually in your hands. You are asking him to do that, the very means for doing which are at this moment locked up in your coffers, or wasted in costly self-gratification. For what purpose has he placed so much wealth in your hands? Surely not to consume it in self-indulgence. 'Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house to lie waste? Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord, Consider your ways.' Look abroad over your assembled myriads; calculate the immense resources of wealth placed at your disposal; imagine that you were to be seized with a noble generosity, like that which at different times descended on the ancient people of God, and then say, what enterprise would be too vast for your means? 'Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the

Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.' Make this consecration of your substance to the cause of Christ; and then come and ask for the conversion of the world. But till then, come, rather, to humble yourselves before him for embezzling the property with which he has intrusted you for his cause, and expending it on yourselves. Come, and ask him to destroy 'the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;' and to pour upon his church a spirit of Christian liberality. Till then, ask only, and, in common consistency, expect only, that he will bless you to the amount of your sacrifices for his cause. What he may choose to do more, by an exercise of his sovereignty, is not for you to surmise: but for you to ask him to do more, is to ask him to proclaim himself to the world the patron of your cupidity."

And while we were listening to this righteous rebuke, should we not feel that we were standing before the Lord in our iniquity? would not confusion cover us?

It is recorded to the high honour of certain

ancient believers, that "God was not ashamed to be called their God." And the reason assigned is, that, instead of coveting earthly possessions, or seeking their happiness in worldly objects, they placed all they held in the hands of God, lived only for his glory, and "declared plainly that they sought a better country, that is, a heavenly." Of such a people God was not ashamed; they did not disgrace him in the eyes of the world; their conduct proclaimed their celestial descent; he gloried in them; he could point the attention of the world to them with divine complacency; he could intrust his character in their hands; he could leave the world to infer what he was, from what they were; he was content to be judged of from the conduct of his people. Could he leave his character to be inferred from the conduct of his people *now?* His spirituality—could the world infer *that* from any remarkable abstraction from earth apparent in their conduct? or is there any thing in the manner and extent of their liberality which would remind the world of his vast, unbounded benevolence? They know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, for their sakes he became poor, that they through

his poverty might be rich;—but from what part of their conduct would the world ever learn this melting truth? No, in these respects, he is ashamed to be called their God. Their self-indulgence, misrepresents his self-sacrifice. Their covetousness, is a shame to his boundless beneficence. His character is falsified by them in the eyes of the world. Nor could he honour them in any distinguished manner before the world without indorsing and confirming that falsification of his character. He is yearning for the happiness of the perishing world; but such is his divine plan that he has only the instrumentality of his church to work by, and *that* is so steeped in the spirit of selfishness, that his grace is held under restraint.

And even the limited degree in which their selfishness has allowed him to bless their agency in his cause, begins to be found inconvenient to that selfishness. For what is the most frequent complaint of those who are deputed to manage that agency! Not that God is withholding his blessing from their proceedings; but that, owing to that blessing, a demand has been created for the gospel which they are unable to supply; a harvest has been raised which they are unable to

reap; a tract of territory so extensive has been conquered, that, unless the resources placed at their command are greatly augmented, they will not be able to subdue and retain it.

There was a time when we thought there was nothing to dread but a want of success; nothing to be prayed for but success. But we did not duly consider the peculiar kind of success which our selfishness required; a cheap and unexpensive success which should support itself, and which should leave our spirit of cupidity untaxed and undisturbed. We have now, however, begun to discover that success itself, of a certain description, may be attended with the most serious inconveniences—inconveniences, that is, to selfish Christians; that we need, in connexion with success, a divine preparation to receive, and improve, and enjoy it. Yes, we feel persuaded, that we must have, and shall have, a change in the church before we shall witness the renovation of the world; that the predictions of Scripture concerning the church must be fulfilled, before those concerning the world shall be accomplished; that the temperature of Christian piety has yet to be raised many degrees; that plans will be executed for

the diffusion of the gospel, which have not yet been imagined; that efforts and sacrifices will yet be made on so gigantic a scale, as to throw the puny doings of the present day completely into the shade.

PART THE THIRD.

CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED.

By "Liberality" the writer means giving Money

SECTION I.

CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY EXPLAINED.

To assert that the cause of Christian liberality exhibits no signs of improvement, would only evince insensibility to obvious facts, and ingratitude to the great Head of the church. Even the feeling which has called for "an essay, bearing upon selfishness as it leads us to live to ourselves, and not unto God and our fellow-men," is to be viewed as an indication that many a Christian more than ever deplores that selfishness. While the ready assent which is generally accorded to every faithful appeal as to the necessity of increased liberality to the cause of God; the growing conviction of the church, that, compared with what will be done, we are at present doing nothing; the approbation with which every new

of any talking of Liberality before he explains it

expedient for augmenting the funds of benevolence is hailed; the streams which appear in almost every new channel of mercy as soon as it is opened; and the increase of funds which our great benevolent institutions have almost annually to announce,—all concur to show, that the church is not only dissatisfied with its past parsimony, but is gradually awaking to the claims of Christian liberality.

But pleasing as these circumstances are, it must be remembered that they are little more than *indications* of improvement. All the great defects in the charity of the Christian church remain with very slight modifications. It is still adapted to a former state of comparative inactivity, rather than to the present period of Christian enterprise. It waits for impulses and appeals. It wants calculation, proportion, and self-denial. It does not keep pace with the grwoing demands of the kingdom of Christ. It wants principle and plan. The great current of Christian property, is as yet undiverted from its worldly channel. The scanty rills of charity which at present water the garden of the Lord, and the ingenuity and effort employed to bring them there, compared with the

almost undiminished tide of selfish expenditure which still holds on its original course, remind one of the slender rivulets which the inhabitants of the east raise from a river by mechanical force to irrigate their thirsty gardens; the mighty current, meanwhile, without exhibiting any sensible diminution of its waters, sweeping on in its ample and ancient bed to the ocean.

By unwearied diligence, the art of *acquiring* money has been well-nigh brought to perfection. Nor can we think of the thousand ways in which it is squandered and dissipated by artificial wants and worldly compliances, without deploring that the art of *wasting* it by the most expeditious methods, should exhibit, as it does, the finish and completeness of a system. The art of *using* it, so as to make it produce the greatest measure of happiness, still remains to be practised. This, indeed, the gospel alone can teach, and has taught from the beginning. In the early age of the Christian church, the heavenly art of embalming property, and making it immortal, was not only known but practised: but, like the process of another embalming, it has now, for ages, been practically lost. Not that its principles have been

Does he mean putting money into the Collecting bag?

unknown; these have always presented themselves on the page of truth, in lines of living light. But though benevolence has never been unknown as a theory, the perverting influence of a worldly spirit has been rendering it more and more impracticable as an art. So that now when the obvious application of its principles is pointed out, and the necessity for carrying those principles into practice is daily becoming more urgent, we begin to be aware of the vast distance to which the church has been drifted from the course of its duty by the current of the world, and how difficult it will be to effect a return.

As an important preliminary to such a return, it should be our first concern to repair to the living oracles of God, and there, in an humble devotional spirit, to *inquire his will on the subject.* This, of itself, would be gaining an important step. It would be proclaiming a wide secession from the world; for, while the ungodly act and feel as if their property were absolutely and irresponsibly their own, we should be thus acknowledging that we hold our property from God, and that we feel ourselves bound to consult his will as to the manner of using it. The

unreflecting Christian who is content with appearances and professions, no doubt imagines that this distinction between the church and the world exists already. Because he has heard, until the sound has become familiar, that all we have and are belongs to God; and has never *heard* the proposition contradicted, he fancies that, on this point, all is well. But it is precisely because Christians generally have *practically* repealed this principle, and trampled it under foot, that the spirit of benevolence has almost been lost from the church. While the practical recognition of this single principle, simple as it is, familiar and admitted as it is in words, would of itself produce an unimagined change in favour of evangelical charity. Geologists tell us that were the poles of the earth to be shifted but a few degrees, the ocean would rush towards the new equator, the most solid parts of the globe give way, and the earth assume an aspect entirely new. The solitary principle, *that we hold our property as subordinate agents for God*, were it only felt, embraced, allowed to have unobstructed operation in our practice, would, of itself, be sufficient to break up the present system of selfishness, and to give

an entirely new aspect to the cause of benevolence.

Let the Christian reader, then, seek to have this principle wrought into his mind as an ever-present conviction. Let the recollection of his property, and the idea of God as its supreme Owner, stand together in his mind in close and constant union. Let him remember that the supreme Proprietorship of his property is in the hands of God as really as the salvation of his soul is; and that the will of God is law here, as much as in the more spiritual domain of faith. What would his conduct be, had he been left the executor of that property by an earthly friend? Would he not have been frequently recurring to the *will* of the testator, that he might not misapply the least fraction? His *supreme Friend* has given him the use of certain property, accompanying the grant with a specification of his *will* concerning its application. Nothing but an humble, grateful, obedient heart is necessary in studying that will, in order to find that it descends to rules, limitations, and directions, of the most clear and minute description. And it is only by keeping these requirements constantly

open before him, and returning to study them daily in that spirit, that the Christian can escape the danger of appropriating and misapplying that which belongs to his Lord and Master.

In the scheme of evangelical charity, the *principle* which actuates the giver is of paramount importance. "He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity." The gospel rejects alike the tax which is reluctantly paid by fear, the bribe which is given to silence importunity, the sacrifice which is offered to a vain ostentation, and the price which is intended to purchase a place in the divine favour, or as a ground of justification before God. The only offering which it accepts is that which originates in a principle of love and obedience to Christ, and which hopes and asks for divine acceptance through him alone. It takes the Christian to the cross, and there it aims to touch all that is tender and generous in his nature, while it says, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." And having made its appeal at the cross, having provided and plied him with the grand motive of redeeming love, it will accept

nothing which overlooks the constraining influence of that principle.

Familiarity with large sums of money may lead a person to make benefactions as munificent as the heart of charity could wish. Animal generosity may act the donor with all the promptitude and easy grace of Charity herself. But "though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, . . . and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." The absence of evangelical love is the want of the incense which alone could impart to the sacrifice a sweet-smelling savour unto God. And while its absence would reduce the collected gifts of a nation to penury itself, its presence imparts to a widow's mite a value which God appreciates, and by which heaven is enriched. It turns "a cup of cold water" into a sacramental symbol; for it is given "in remembrance of Christ." Suspended from the throne of heaven, it transmutes the least gift that may be hung on it into a jewel destined to augment the glory of him on whose head are "many crowns."

That which constitutes the superiority of evangelical piety, as a self-propagating and diffusive system, to every form of false and heterodox

religion is, that it has for its great actuating principle *the love of Christ.* This is "the seed in itself;" the leaven which shall never cease to ferment till it has leavened the entire mass of humanity. Hence, every thing which would obtain acceptance with God must exhibit marks of the assimilating and sanctifying power of this principle. Nay, every thing which would find favour in the eyes of the Christian himself, even his own acts and offerings of charity, must bear evident relation to Christ, or receive the condemnation of his own grateful heart. In the exercise of a holy jealousy for his blessed Lord, he is led to scrutinize his motives, to trace his benevolence to its source, to examine whether or not it took its rise at the cross; and, if it did not, he finds cause for penitence and humiliation before God. Thus, while false religion makes its almsdeeds a substitute for piety, the gospel heightens benevolence into one of the most spiritual and improving duties the Christian can perform. For, by imbuing his heart with the love of God, it enables him to taste the godlike enjoyment of doing good; and, by teaching him to refer all his acts of benevolence to Christ, to per-

form them as expressions of gratitude to him, to hope for their acceptance through him, and to pray that they may tend to his glory, it keeps him near to the cross, in an atmosphere of spiritual and elevated piety. And when once he has become native to that element, when the expansive, delightful, irresistible power of the Saviour's grace has become his ruling motive, he would feel an inferior principle to be little less than degradation and bondage. He accounts the costliest sacrifice he can offer as poor; resents the limits which a cold and calculating selfishness would impose on his offerings as chains and fetters; and if called to pour forth his blood as a libation on the altar of Christian sacrifice, he would feel that he had rendered an ample explanation of his conduct, by saying, with the apostle, "The love of Christ constraineth us."

In order that our benevolence may become a valuable habit, *it must be provided with regular resources.* Nothing good or great can be effected without *plan.* In their own worldly business, men perceive the importance of method: and, if they would render their liberality efficient, they must adopt a system for that also. On this sub-

ject the gospel itself prescribes,—"Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." "By which," saith Paley, "I understand St. Paul to recommend what is the very thing wanting with most men, *the being charitable upon a plan;* that is, upon a deliberate comparison of our fortunes with the reasonable expenses and expectations of our families, to compute what we can spare, and to lay by so much for charitable purposes."

To take, indeed, a *weekly* account how God hath prospered us is not in all cases possible; but the spirit of the direction would be equally satisfied if, on taking the account at other *stated* times, we only lay by for God as he hath prospered us. Owing to the want of a plan like this, the cause of Christ is often an unwelcome and an unsuccessful applicant; selfishness, which has always the advantage of being able to be the first claimant, squanders in superfluities what conscience would have devoted to God; and many, it is to be feared, from not having wherewith to answer the calls and impulses of charity as they arose in the heart, have at length lost

the very disposition to do good. While the advantages arising from the adoption of such an arrangement are numerous; we are under less temptation to withhold our charity; our duty is made more *convenient* by rendering it thus in easy instalments; our love to Christ is more gratified by being able to present him in the end with a larger offering; the hand of God is regularly recognised in our worldly affairs; his presence is invited, so to speak, into the very heart of our prosperity, whence the world is most anxious to exclude him, invited to audit the accounts of our gains; our offerings are presented with cheerfulness, because they come from a fund designed expressly to no other end than charity; and the cause of benevolence, no longer a dependent on precarious charity, is welcomed and honoured as an authorized claimant, a divine creditor, while what we retain for our own use is divinely blessed by the dedication of the rest to God.

Nothing that is good or great, we repeat, can be effected without plan. Business, to be successful, must be conducted on system; and why should not the book which records the occasional

and the regular contributions of charity be kept and inspected as carefully as the ledger of trade? Covetousness plans for selfish purposes; and why should not benevolence counter-plan, and organize its resources for objects of divine philanthropy? Political economy plans for national purposes; and why should there not be an ecclesiastical economy to systematize the resources of that kingdom which is not of this world? We desire not a revival of sumptuary laws to restrain extravagance in diet and dress, but a tax self-levied on all the luxuries and indulgences of life. We ask not for an inquisitorial Roman *census*, but for a conscientious assessment of all the property of the Christian church, so scrupulously made and regularly repeated, that, like that ancient republic, we may have accurate returns from time to time of all the statistics of the Christian empire, and may know our resources for war with the kingdom of darkness.

But what *proportion* of our income ought we to devote to charitable uses? If Christian love be permitted to answer this question, and assign the amount, there is no reason to fear a too scanty allowance. On the other hand, if selfishness be

suffered to decide, there is ground to fear that even an inspired reply, could such be obtained, would be heard only to be overruled. Besides which, the gospel of Christ, in harmony with its great design of establishing a reign of love, leaves its followers to assess themselves. It puts into their hands, indeed, a claim upon their property, but leaves the question *how much?* to be determined by themselves. In assisting them to fill up the blank with the proper assessment, the only step which it takes is to point them to the cross of Christ; and, while their eye is fixed there in admiring love, to say, "How much owest thou unto thy Lord?" "Freely ye have received, freely give."

It must be quite unnecessary to remind the Christian that a principle of justice to man must be laid as the basis of all our calculations on this subject. "For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt-offering." To present him with that which his own laws of justice would assign to another, is to overlook the claims of even ordinary honesty, and to make him the Patron of unrighteousness. But while the worldling looks on justice as the only claimant on his property, and

concludes that when *that* is satisfied, he may warrantably sacrifice the whole remainder to himself, the Christian views it only as a preparation for sacrificing to God.

It is observable that Abraham and Jacob, on particular occasions, voluntarily devoted to God—what afterwards became a divine law for the Jewish nation—*a tenth* of their property. Without implying that their example has any obligation on us, we may venture to say that *one tenth* of our whole income is an approved proportion for charity, for those who, with *so* doing, are able to support themselves and families. For the more opulent, and especially for those who have no families, a larger proportion would be equally easy. For some, one half would be too little; while, for others, a twentieth, or even a fiftieth, would require the nicest frugality and care. Indeed, of many among the poor it may be said, that if they give *any thing* they give their *share*, they *cast in more* than all their brethren.

But in determining the proportion to be made sacred to God, the Christian would surely rather exceed than fall short of the exact amount. *With* whom is he stipulating? *For* whom is he prepar-

ing the offering? Well may the recollection put every covetous thought to instant flight; tinging his cheek with shame at the bare possibility of ingratitude; and impelling him to lay his all at the feet of Christ. Only let him think of the great love wherewith Christ hath loved him, only let him pass by the cross on his way to the altar of oblation, and his richest offering will appear totally unworthy of divine acceptance. When Christ is the object to be honoured, the affection of the pardoned penitent cannot stop to calculate the value of its alabaster box of precious ointment—that is an act to which only a Judas can stoop—its chief and sole regret is that the unction has not a richer perfume, and a higher value. When a Zaccheus finds himself standing, a sinner saved by grace, in the presence of the Being who has saved him, he exclaims, "Behold, Lord, *the half* of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wronged any man by false accusation, I restore unto him four-fold." Covetousness, a moment before, was enthroned in his heart; but now it is beneath his feet. A moment ago, wealth was his idol; but now its only value consists in furnishing him with an offering of love to Christ.

What things were gain to him, those he counted loss for Christ.

And as the great principle of love to Christ will not allow the more opulent to give scantily, so neither will it permit the poorest to come before him empty. It was one of the divine enactments even of the legal dispensation,—*None shall come before me empty.* But that which was matter of law with the Israelite, the Christian will seize as a golden opportunity for evincing his love to Christ; and will bring, though it be only a grain of incense for an offering, or a leaf for that wreath of praise and honour which the church delights to lay at the feet of Christ. Whatever Scripture example others may profess to copy, he will select the example of the benevolent widow; and, while others content themselves with only admiring it, he will often reflect on its imitableness. Nor will the language of the apostle be ever heard by him but as an address to himself,—"Let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." "These hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye

ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Agreeably with these sentiments, the man who, at one time, imagined that his poverty quite exempted *him* from the obligations of charity, and only rendered him an *object* of it, is no sooner made the partaker of grace, than he feels himself impelled to place some offering on the altar of Christian benevolence; and, with the ready eye and hand of affection, he soon detects, for this end, some small superfluity which can be retrenched, or some leisure time which can be profitably employed. And when his mite-like offering, the fruit of hard self-denial, or of the sweat of his brow, is presented, nothing could inflict on his grateful heart a deeper wound than to see that offering rejected on the ground of its comparative insignificance, or of his supposed inability to give it. It is the offering of a sinner's gratitude to a Saviour's love, and Heaven rejoices over the oblation.

A well-digested scheme of charity will be considerate in the selection of its *objects*. The benevolence which has not prudence for its almoner, may create the evils which it meant to destroy.

If there be any danger in this respect, in the present day, it does not lie so much in the choice of wrong objects, as in the neglect of some right ones. The principles of benevolent institutions are now so well understood; every new candidate for patronage is so open to inspection; and the streams of charity so steadily watched from their rise to the point of their destination, that there is little more than the bare possibility of any benevolent institution existing long in a state of abuse, or so as to generate more evil than good. Whatever danger now exists, arises from the rapid multiplication of new objects, and the consequent liability of the old ones to desertion; and still more, perhaps, from the liability of those minor objects which relate exclusively to the bodily welfare of man, being eclipsed by the surpassing grandeur and magnitude of such as relate to the infinite and the eternal.

If, fifty years ago, a patron of the benevolent institutions of that day could have been foretold of the number, the magnitude, and the revenues, of the great evangelical societies which at present adorn our land, he might surely have been excused for fearing that the objects of *his* regard would in

consequence be displaced and forgotten. But the event has shown that his fears would have been unfounded. Experience demonstrates that the heart which responds to the cries of a world perishing through lack of knowledge, is the heart which most readily thrills at the cry of bodily want; that those who care most for the souls of the heathen, are among the most active agents of patriotic and local charities; that genuine Christian charity, while it leaves no object unattempted on account of its vastness, overlooks none on account of its minuteness. Copying, in this respect, the example of Him who in his way to the cross to save a world, often stood still to give health to the sick, and to wipe away the tears of the mourner; sowing, at each step, the seeds of those various institutions of mercy which are still springing up in his church; and who, while suspended on the cross in the crisis of human redemption, still thought of his filial relation, and tenderly provided for a mother's comfort.

But the limited resources of the Christian philanthropist, compared with the number and diversity of the objects soliciting his aid, render selection indispensably necessary. On the one hand,

he must not confine his regards to objects purely religious, though of the loftiest and most comprehensive order, to the neglect of that charity which draws out its soul to the hungry, and which visits the fatherless and widow in their affliction; and, on the other, he must not limit his attentions to the wants of the life that now is, and remain an uninterested spectator of the efforts which are made around him to save a world from perdition. The two classes of objects should be combined in his regards. By descending to the one class, he will be keeping his benevolent feelings in a healthy, active, vigorous state; and by ascending to the other, he will be giving them scope and expansion, diffusing and multiplying them over the whole field of mercy. By a wise distribution of his means he may connect himself with all the objects of beneficence, from the casual relief of the mendicant, to the combined, systematic, and mighty project of the Christian church to make the Bible the book of the world. And as he marks the graduated scale of Christian charities which stands between these two extremes, he will conscientiously consider which are the charities that call for his

especial aid, and the proportion of support which each demands.

But who does not feel that the era of effective Christian benevolence has yet to commence? Let him sketch the most simple scheme of benevolence which the gospel can approve, and he will perceive at every step that he is writing the condemnation of the church. Compared with the time, indeed, when next to nothing was contributed to the cause of Christ, we may now be said to give much; but compared with what *ought* to be, and with what we are persuaded *will* be, consecrated to God, we are still contributing next to nothing. The sentiment of the church on the subject of property is as yet very little elevated above that of the world; deep-rooted worldly notions have yet to be eradicated; and the right use of wealth in its relation to the cause of Christ to be taught and enforced as an essential branch of Christian practice. The great lesson taught by our Lord's voluntary selection of a state of poverty is yet to be fully understood; the evident application of many plain passages of Scripture to be made; doctrines startling to selfishness to become familiar and welcome; sentiments already

familiar to be enlarged and practically applied; the word *benevolence* itself to be differently understood; the demon of covetousness to be cast out of the church; and the whole economy of benevolence to be revised.

And who, with the word of God in his hand, but must feel that an era of enlarged Christian liberality is hastening on? Prophecy is full of it. As often almost as she opens her lips on the subject of Messiah's reign, the consecration of the world's wealth forms part of her song. "To him shall be given of the gold of Sheba." "The merchandise of Tyre shall be holiness to the Lord; it shall not be treasured nor laid up." "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God." "Kings shall bring presents unto him;" "they shall bring gold and incense;" and into his kingdom "they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations." Wealth, which for so many ages had robbed him of his glory, and which in so many idolatrous forms had been erected in his stead, shall be brought to his altar, and employed as the fuel of a sacrifice

in which the heart shall ascend as incense before him. It will then be felt that the highest use to which wealth can be applied is to employ it for God; that this is the only way to dignify that which is intrinsically mean; to turn that which is perishing into unfading crowns and imperishable wealth. As if the image and superscription of Christ instead of Cæsar — as if the hallowed impress of the cross itself were visible on all the currency of earth, his people shall look on all their wealth as the property of Christ, and be constantly meditating the means of employing it most advantageously for his glory. In wedding his church, it shall then be felt that he wedded her wealth also; and, bringing it forth, and placing it at his feet as a part of her poor unworthy dowry, she shall wish that for his sake it had been ten thousand times ten thousand more.

Now, the only distinction is between him that gives a little and him that gives nothing; then, a new classification will have obtained. There will be no one in the church who gives nothing; his place will be occupied by him who only gives little—by which will be meant him who, what-

ever the *amount* of his gift may be, gives only from his superfluity; while the honourable title of *the benevolent* will be reserved for such only as deny themselves in order that they may give the more. Self-denial, if not synonymous with benevolence, will then be considered an essential part of it. He who gives nothing will be looked on as an avowed enemy to the cause of Christ; he who only gives a little from his superfluity will be considered covetous; and he only who adds to his superfluity the precious savings of self-denial besides, will be honoured as truly charitable.

The Christian will then look on himself in the light of a channel between God and his fellow-creatures—a channel prepared expressly for receiving and conveying the overflowings of the Fountain of goodness to those around him; and accordingly he will be "ready to distribute, willing to communicate." Not content with the slender supplies of his own property, he will seek to excite the liberality of others; to become their almoner; to swell the streams of his own charity by the contributions of others. And thus he will at once be the means of keeping the benevolence of his brethren in activity, of bringing greater

glory to God, and of doing greater good to the world.

The Christian parent will not then be content with teaching his children the art of getting money most easily and respectably, or of spending it most advantageously to themselves; he will train them to habits of benevolence; impress them early with "the value of money" for the cause of Christ; show them that in its subserviency to that cause consists its chief value; that they should labour with their hands rather than be destitute of the means of giving. He will make it an indispensable object of their education to render them proficients in the art of employing their substance to the glory of God.

As far as his means enable him, he will pray only to give, and give only to pray. His every prayer will contain a petition for a more abundant outpouring of the spirit of Christian liberality and dedication; and the very feeling which impelled him to utter the petition, shall impel him when he arises from his knees to devise liberal things. And, then having gratified the divine impulse to the utmost extent of his means, he will hasten to unload his grateful heart before

God, and to say, "Who am I, that I should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." Nay, could he command and set in motion all the benevolent agencies in the universe, the same god-like motive which led him to do so would then impel him to the throne of God to obtain *his* efficacious blessing upon the whole. Having put all human agency in requisition, he would labour and wrestle in prayer to engage the infinite love and power of God.

He will receive every accredited applicant for the cause of Christ, as a messenger deputed from Christ himself. And, as if his blessed Lord were standing before him, and saying, "I am hungry, will you not feed me? I am thirsty, will you not give me drink? I am a stranger, will you not take me in? My cause is languishing for want of support, will you not aid it?" — He will hasten to bring forth his all, and say, "O Lord my God, all this store cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own." In doing this, indeed, he would only be copying the example of the benevolent widow; but though that example received the sanction of Christ, and as such was

intended to be *more than admired* by his church, yet who could imitate it at present without incurring, not from the world only, but from the great majority of Christian professors also, the blame of great improvidence? But then, her conduct shall be regarded as *exemplary;* and the Saviour himself will undertake the defence of her imitators, and say, "They loved much, for they have much forgiven."

Now, the Christian professor too commonly allows his *regular contribution* to check his liberality, to prevent his giving more than the stipulated sum, though there are times when his benevolent impulses would prompt him to exceed that sum; then, he will regard his subscription only as a pledge that he will *not give less*, but as leaving his liberality open to all the impulses of an unrestricted benevolence. Now, he is too often disposed to shun the applications for charity, and, if he is overlooked and passed by, to view it as a fortunate escape; but then he will do good *as he hath opportunity*—creating the opportunity which he cannot find already made to his hands. Now, his ability exceeds his inclination; but then his inclination will be greater than his ability; like

the Macedonian Christians of whom the apostle testifies, "I bear them record that to their power, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves." Instead of being charitable only on comparative *distraint*, he will often anticipate application, and surprise the agents of beneficence by unexpected gifts; thus strengthening their faith in God, and inciting them to enlarge their designs for the kingdom of Christ: like the same believers of whom the apostle records, that, instead of needing to be solicited, they entreated him to accept their contributions—"praying us with much entreaty to accept the gift." Like the happy parent of a happy family, he will hail every new-born claim on his resources, and cheerfully deny himself in order to support it. And, instead of giving as he now does, as scantily as if he only aimed to keep the Christian cause from famishing, he will then act on the persuasion that his own enjoyment is identified with its growth and prosperity.

And let it not be supposed that during that happy period it will be necessary to the support of the Christian interest that its friends should live in a state of *comfortless* self-denial. The *pre-*

valence of the benevolent spirit will render this superfluous. When the thousand drains of selfishness are cut off, the cause of Christ will easily find an abundance from his friends, and will leave an abundance to them all. When every man brings his all to Christ, every man will be able to take away with him again an ample supply for his most comfortable subsistence. When every fresh convert to Christ becomes a willing supporter of his interest, the accession of numbers will increase its *supplies* more rapidly than its *wants*.

O, happy period! Holiness to the Lord shall be written not only on common things, but on those which men have been accustomed most jealously to withhold from God, and to consider their own. Even the mines of the earth shall, in a sense, be ceded to Christ; "the God of the whole earth shall he be called;" and "every one shall submit themselves unto him with pieces of silver." *He* shall be considered the wise man, not who keeps most, but who gives most to God; and the happiness of bestowing, shall be rated above the pleasure of acquiring. Happy period! when men, instead of making gold their god, shall make God their gold: and when the principles of benevo-

lence shall be looked on as a science taught from heaven, the practice of which is necessary to conduct them to heaven. The living law of benevolence written in the heart will operate more powerfully than all the sumptuary laws which were ever enacted to restrain the extravagance of society. The cause of Christ will be viewed as the only safe repository of wealth; as the great INTEREST in which the affluent will invest their abundance, and in which the poor will deposit their mite, assured that it will thus augment to a treasure exceeding their powers of computation. And wealth, the pernicious influence of which some of the wisest of men have feared so much that they have prohibited the use of it by law,—wealth, the great embroiler and corrupter of the world, will be employed as one of the leading means of restoring mankind to union and happiness; and thus Christ will triumph over the enemy in its own home, and with its own weapons.

SECTION II.

CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY ENFORCED.

And why should the delightful period to which we have adverted, when the gospel theory of Christian benevolence shall be realized, be deemed remote? The duties of that period, are the duties of every period; and, therefore, of the present. The obligations which will be binding then, are binding at this moment. No new incitements to benevolence will be furnished from heaven. The great considerations with which the gospel has long since made us familiar, are the identical motives which will then reign and triumph. Remote, therefore, as that era may be to the eye of the indolent and the selfish, the consistent believer will not think of waiting for its arrival before he begins its duties; he will feel that those duties are

all present and urgent. May a review of the tender and weighty considerations by which they are enforced, fill him with generous and grateful purposes such as he never felt before; and may God the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love and grace, condescend to breathe on him the breath of a new life, that he may henceforth live only to carry those purposes into effect to the glory of Christ his Redeemer!

In every question of duty, your first inquiry, Christian reader, will naturally respect the will of God. Before listening to any other consideration, you will lift up an imploring eye, and say, "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?" Now there is no subject on which God has more clearly or fully revealed his will than on the duty of Christian liberality.

Think of *the right which he has in all you possess.* There is a sense in which no man can be said to possess an exclusive and irresponsible right in property, even in relation to his fellow-creatures. The land which he calls *his own*, is still guarded and watched over by a public law which would hold him responsible for its destruction. But if man thus claims a common interest in the

most independent description of property, how much more does God hold a right in your possessions? He created them at first; and hence he has an original and supreme property in them. The world is his, and the fulness thereof. He continues them in existence every moment; and is thus every moment asserting afresh his original right, and establishing a new title to dominion over them. You have not brought into existence a single mite: all that you have done is to collect together what he had made ready to your hands. And whence did you derive the skill and ability to do this? "Thou must remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth." Hence he cautions you against the sin of "saying in your heart, My power, and the might of mine own hand, hath gotten me this wealth," lest you should fall into the consequent sin of forgetting that he is still the supreme Proprietor of all you possess. And hence too he solemnly reminds you that your enjoyments are his *gifts*, only in the sense that you had nothing wherewith to purchase them, and not in the sense that he has given away his right in them: that they are deposited with you as his steward, not

alienated from him and vested in you as their master; that both they and you are his, to do with as seemeth good in his sight.

The moment you lose sight, therefore, of his absolute right to all you possess, you are embezzling your Lord's property, and realizing the character of the unjust steward. You are provoking God to resume his own, and to transfer it to more faithful hands. Whereas he looks to you to assert his dominion in the midst of an ungrateful and rebellious world. The purpose for which he created you at first, and for which he has created you anew in Christ Jesus, is, that you might show forth his praise before a world labouring to forget him; that while *they* are sullenly and impiously appropriating every thing to themselves, as if he had ceased to reign and even to exist, you might continually consecrate and offer up your substance before their eyes as an oblation to his glory, and thus daily vindicate his claims, as the fire perpetually burning upon the Jewish altar protested daily against the idolatry of the world, and proclaimed the one living and true God. And will you not do this? Surely you will not go over and join the party you are intended to condemn.

Surely you will not betray your Lord, and enable his enemies to triumph. Then hasten to his throne and acknowledge his right. Take all that you have into his presence, and dedicate it afresh to his service. Inscribe his blessed name on all your possessions.

Think of the great goodness you enjoy at his hands. His tender mercies are over *all* his works; but how many of those mercies has he caused to meet upon your head! "He daily loadeth you with his benefits;" and will you bear them all away from his presence to consume them upon yourself? will you distribute none of the precious load among the numerous applicants he has placed around you? "He *crowneth* thee with his loving-kindness and tender mercies;" and wearing the crown of his royal favour, his sovereign love, will you confine its light to yourself? will you not proclaim the honour and royalty of your descent by humbly imitating his regal munificence and grace? He has placed you in a world of which his own description is, that it *is full of his goodness*—the treasury of the material universe. Men have filled it with sin; but he notwithstanding keeps it filled with his goodness. The

overflowing fulness of the ocean—the amplitude of the all-encompassing air—the unconfined plenitude of the light—all conspire to attest the infinite exuberance of his bounty, and to surcharge your heart with corresponding sentiments of goodness. To be selfish in such a world is one of the greatest triumphs of sin. Covetousness cannot move in it without being rebuked at every step. Had your life been spent till to-day in the solitude and darkness of a dungeon, and had you now just come forth into the open theatre of the vast creation, and awoke for the first time to the full consciousness of all this infinite goodness, would not your heart enlarge and expand with all warm and generous emotions? Could you speedily indulge in selfishness in a world which you found supported by charity? and by charity so abundant that the divine Donor seems to have aimed to make the sin impossible? His rain would surely baptize you with the spirit of love: his sun would melt you into kindness. This is why he sheds them both upon the just and the unjust. And will you not aspire to be like him? Will you not become the servant of his love to his creatures? Can you live day after day in this region of his

goodness—can you have the ennobling conception of his goodness occupying your mind year after year—can you actually call yourself a son of this good and gracious God, an heir of his infinite goodness, and yet retain a narrow, selfish, and contracted mind? The Lord Jesus himself calls on you to be merciful even as your Father in heaven is merciful.

But hitherto we have been standing only on the threshold of the temple of his goodness. The *great* display, the "unspeakable gift" remains within. Your misery as a sinner had excited his compassion; your guilt demanded a sacrifice; your spiritual destitution had nothing to offer. Approach the altar of sacrifice; and behold the substitute which his grace provides. "God *so* loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." "Herein is love!" The universe is crowded with proofs of his beneficence; but here is a proof which outweighs them all. How much he loved us we can never compute; we have no line with which to fathom, no standard with which to compare it, but he *so* loved us that he sent his only begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins. "Herein is love!" "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

And while you are standing in the presence of this matchless display of love, "what doth the Lord require of thee?" For yourself, he invites you to accept that love and be happy. And in relation to your fellow-men, he only requires that the stream of gratitude which his great love has drawn from your heart should be poured into that channel in which a tide of mercy is rolling through the world, and bearing blessings to the nations. He who for your sake gave his Son, asks you for his sake to give of your worldly substance to the cause of human happiness. He asks you, Christian, to cast in your mite into that treasury into which he hath given his Son, and poured all the blessings of his grace.

Nor is this all: he invites you to advance from the altar of sacrifice to the holiest of all within the veil;—in other words, he hath given you Christ that he may give you himself. It was by wandering from him that man first became selfish and unhappy. It was by losing him that man was reduced to the necessity of looking for happiness in the creature. And, because no single kind of created good can satisfy the soul, man sought to accumulate all kinds, to monopolise every thing

—he became selfish. He is disposed to look on every thing which another enjoys, as so much lost to himself; as so much taken away from what might otherwise have fallen to his own share; and thus he is selfish. But the blessed God, by offering to bring you back again to himself, is offering to make you independent of all inferior things; to put you in possession of a good which shall enable you to look down with disdain on those things about which others are selfish; to lead you to an *infinite* good; a good, therefore, about which you *need* not be selfish, for were all the universe to share and enjoy it with you, it would still be an unexhausted, infinite fulness of happiness.

Now let the most miserly individual come suddenly into the possession of great wealth, he would be conscious, at least for a short time, of kind and generous emotions. What then should be your emotions at discovering that, through Christ, you have found a God? And think, *what* a God he is! Enumerate his perfections; call up in your mind his exalted attributes; recollect some of the displays of his glory, the splendours of his throne, the amplitude of his

dominions, the angelic orders of his kingdom, the richness of his gifts, the untouched ocean of happiness yet in reserve for his people—and when your mind is filled, repeat to yourself the wondrous truth, "This God is my God for ever and ever." And, then, think what it is to have him *for your God:* it is to have a real, participating, eternal interest in all that he is; to have him for your "all in all;" to be "filled with all the fulness of God."

Christian, are you aware of your wealth? have you yet awoke to a conscious possession of your infinite wealth? and is it possible that you can still cleave to the poor and perishing dross of earth? What, shall the accession of infinite wealth make no difference in your conduct? Will you be as covetous with a God as without? Do you not feel, rather, that you could give away the world itself as a trifle, while you stand and gaze at these infinite riches? All who have truly and fully returned to God have felt thus. They lost their selfishness. They gazed on this glory, and the world was eclipsed; they thought of it, and their hearts became too large for earth; they reached after it, and the world

fell from their hands, from their hearts. Having found the true source of happiness, they would fain have had all mankind to come and share it with them. And when he commanded them to call the world to come to him and be happy, they gave away every thing, even life itself, in the noble employ, and from love to his name.

The obligations which his love has laid *you* under are as great as theirs. But how much less, it is to be feared, have you felt them. And yet *they* felt them less than their magnitude would have warranted. For when their emancipated spirits had ascended from the scene of martyrdom to heaven—when they there awoke to a clear perception of the hell they had escaped, and the glories they had reached—even he among them who on earth had been most alive to a sense of his obligations, would feel as if he then felt them for the first time. And is all that weight of obligation at this moment resting upon *you*? O, where are the numbers which shall compute it? What is the period long enough to recount it? "What can you render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" What sacrifices can you devise costly enough to express your sense of them?

Christian, could you have supposed that your property would be accepted as one of those sacrifices? Had he not condescended to invite the offering, could you have imagined that any amount, or any employment, of earthly wealth, would have been accepted by him? It is one of the lowest expressions of love you can give; yet he accepts even that. Though there is no proportion whatever between the debt you owe him, and all the wealth of the world, he yet condescends to regard the smallest fraction of that wealth as an expression of your love to his name. Let this, then, dignify wealth in your eyes: value it henceforth on this account, that the Lord will accept it at your hands as an offering of love. Rejoice that you have found out an oblation which he will accept short of the sacrifice of your life. Be thankful, though you may have but little with which to present him. Practise self-denial, that you may make that little more. Seek out the right objects for it, the objects which you deem to be the dearest in his sight. Give to them all you can; for could you give ten thousand times more, your obligations would go on increasing infinitely faster

than your gifts. They are multiplying on you even while you are in the act of giving. Give under a grateful sense of your obligations; and you will feel that giving itself is a benefit; that it is an act in which you *receive* more than you render.

But to increase your incentives to charity, your heavenly Father has laid on you *his divine commands.* He charges it upon you that you "do good unto all men;" that you "put on bowels of mercy;" that you "abound" in the grace of "liberality;" that you "be ready to distribute, willing to communicate." And in saying this, he is only commanding you to be happy, and to communicate happiness. He has often represented charity in his word as equivalent with relative righteousness; by which he would intimate that it is a principal part of such righteousness. Where the second table of the law is abridged, and its duties summed up in a few words, charity is not only never omitted, but always takes the lead. In all general descriptions of piety, the practice of this duty is specified as a chief element. It is declared to be the most acceptable expression of our love to God.

The choicest blessings, blessedness itself, the essence of all blessings combined, is promised to it. And in the last great day, when the Son of man shall sit in judgment on the world, the presence or absence of Christian benevolence is described by our Lord as determining the destinies of men. Now these are only so many methods by which God would render the expression of his will the more emphatical, and urge us to obey it.

In consecrating your substance to him, then, you will be not only gratifying your sense of obligation, you will feel also that you are obeying the will of your God on a subject on which he is most earnest and express. And what should furnish a stronger impulse, or yield you higher delight, than this? In heaven, *his will* is the only motive to obedience which is necessary. And will you not rejoice in an occasion which joins you with angels in "doing his commandments?" Hasten, then, to take your offering before him; he is waiting the presentation of your gift. The hand of his holy law is laid upon a portion of your property; surely you will not think of taking any of that portion

away; rather, add to it; let him see that your love is not so easily satisfied as his law; that your gratitude goes beyond his command; that were it possible for his law to be repealed, the love which you bear to his blessed name would still be a law constantly demanding fresh sacrifices for his altar.

In its inculcations of beneficence, the Bible appeals to *a principle of well-regulated self-interest.* Instead of taking it for granted that we should be enamoured of duty for its own sake alone, our heavenly Father evinces the kindest consideration of our fallen condition, by accompanying his commands with appropriate promises and blessings. He graciously allures us to cultivate the tree of Christian charity, by engaging that all its fruit shall be our own. "He who soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." "God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love."

The most marked interpositions and signal blessings even of *earthly prosperity* have attended the practice of Christian liberality in every age. Volumes might easily be filled with well-attested instances of the remarkable manner in which God

has honoured and rewarded those who in faith and obedience have devoted their property to him. Alas! that the Christian church should feel so little interest in recording such instances to the glory of its Lord! that we should be so slow of heart to believe them when they are recorded!—for what do they prove, but only that God is not unrighteous to forget his promises? —and that his people should give him so little opportunity of illustrating his paternal character by trusting their temporal affairs more completely to his hands.

Spiritual prosperity is inseparable from Christian liberality. For "God loveth a cheerful giver: and God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." As often as you practise this duty in an evangelical spirit, you must be conscious that the best part of your sanctified nature is called into exercise; your heart is partially discharged of its remaining selfishness; your mind is braced more for Christian activity; your sympathy causes you to feel afresh your alliance with man; your beneficence enables you to rejoice in your union of spirit with Christ,

and adds a new bond to that power of affection which binds you to his cause. And while other duties bring you nearer to Christ, this may be said at once to place you by his side, and to exalt you into a real though humble imitator of his divine benevolence.

The Christian, moreover, is assured that the property which he devotes to God is so much treasure laid up in heaven, so much seed destined to fructify into a harvest of eternal enjoyment. Christian, would you render your property *secure?* Place it in the hand of omnipotent Faithfulness. Retain it in your own possession, and it is the proper emblem of uncertainty; but devote it to God, and from that moment it is stamped with his immutability, his Providence becomes your estate, and his word your unfailing security. Would you *enjoy* your substance? "Give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you." The oblation of your first-fruits unto God will cleanse, and sanctify, and impart a superior relish to all you possess. Like the first Christians, you will then eat your meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Would you *increase* your property? "Honour the Lord with

thy substance, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." "For this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto." Sow your substance, then, as seed in the hand of Christ, *that* hand which fed the multitude with a morsel, and which multiplies whatever it touches with its own infinite bounty. Would you *grow in grace?* in love and likeness to Christ? Would you increase with all the increase of God? and abound in the fruits of the Spirit? "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." Would you be *rich for eternity?* Would you cultivate "fruit that may abound to your account" in the invisible world? Invest your property in the cause of Christ; and he engages to requite you,—not, indeed, as of debt; this the *magnitude* of the requital shows, but of his own exuberant munificence,—he promises to repay you a hundred-fold in the present life, and in the world to come, life everlasting. As much of your property as you have already devoted to him, however humbly you may think of it, is regarded and watched over by him as "a good foundation laid

up against the time to come, that you may lay hold on eternal life." And all that you may hereafter cast into his treasury, shall certainly precede your arrival in heaven, and there be converted for you into incorruptible treasures "to the praise of the glory of his grace."

Is the welfare of your posterity an object? The parent who makes this an excuse for robbing the cause of God of its due is defrauding his offspring of God's blessing, entailing on them the divine displeasure, leaving them heirs of the punishment which his own robbery of God has deserved. This is improvidence of the most awful kind. But let your regard for *their* wants, be combined with a proportionate regard for the claims of benevolence, and you will be demising to your offspring that rich, that inexhaustible inheritance, the inheritance of God's blessing. Providence will look on them as its own wards; will care for them as its own children.

Do you desire to be remembered, to enjoy lasting fame? "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." "The memory of the just is blessed." And here, by the *righteous* and the *just* is to be understood especially the bountiful.

His memory is followed with commendations into the presence of God. His character is embalmed in its own piety. His name passes with commendation through the lips of God, and that gives it immortality. His benevolence resulted from the grace of God; and, as such, the honour of God is concerned in making his memory immortal.

Would you acquire a right in your property? a right which shall justify you in calling it your own? By withholding it from God, you are forfeiting all interest in it, and laying yourself open to the charge of embezzlement and fraud. But by devoting it to his service, you would be acquiring an everlasting interest in it; for you would never cease to enjoy the good resulting from its divine employment. Hence the solution of the epitaph of a charitable man, "What I retained I have lost, what I gave away remains with me."

By the practice of Christian liberality, *the glory of God and the credit of religion are promoted;*— and what object should be of more precious and abiding concern to the believer than this? "The administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by

many thanksgivings unto God: while by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them and to all men." The new-born liberality of the first Christians for the support of their needy brethren threw the church into a holy transport of delight. It was bringing the benevolent power of Christianity to the test; and, as a masterpiece of human mechanism, when tried and found to exceed expectation, fills the beholders with delight —the result of "the experiment of this ministration" was such as to call forth songs of exultation to the glory of God. It displayed the gospel in a new aspect, brought to light its benevolent energies, showed them that much as they knew of its virtues, it contained hidden excellencies which it would require time and circumstances to evolve and display: it filled the church with a chorus of praise to the glory of God.

For what but his grace could produce such liberality? It was supernatural; the apostle, therefore, emphatically denominates it *the grace of God.* So spontaneous and munificent was it, that it resembled the gifts of his grace. So purely

did it result from love to the brethren, from the overflowings of tender compassion for their wants, that it was truly godlike. So unparalleled and unworldly an act was it, that the grace of God alone could produce it. It was grace from the Fountain, flowing forth in streams of liberality through the channels of his people. As if it were the noblest form that the love of God could take in his people, he confers on it this crowning title, *the grace of God.* And, indeed, it would be easy to show that there is scarcely any duty so purely the result of grace as genuine Christian liberality; that the practice of it on any thing like the primitive scale, requires more grace, and exercises and illustrates a greater number of the principles of piety, than almost any other duty. The church cannot witness it without being strongly reminded of her high descent, her unearthly character; without falling down afresh before the throne of Him whose constraining love thus triumphs over the selfishness of humanity. The world cannot witness it without feeling its own selfishness condemned, without secretly bowing to the divinity of religion.

Christian, would you enjoy the most endearing

evidences of your heavenly Father's love? Place your property at his disposal, and daily trust him for daily provision. If his character be paternal, your character should be filial; and the leading feature of *that* is unlimited dependence. Would you honour him in his church? Copy the example of "the churches of Macedonia" in their abundant liberality; and you will provoke some of your fellow-Christians to emulation, and send others with grateful hearts into the presence of God, and assist in enlarging the sphere of evangelical labour, and raise the standard of Christian piety, and cause the church of Christ to resound with the high praises of his constraining love. And would you glorify God before the world? Let the light of your Christian liberality shine before men. Not only practise the duty, but practise it on such a scale as shall proclaim to them the existence of a superintending Providence, and convince them of your reliance on its care. Devise liberal things for the cause of God, and you will thus be asserting the quarrel of your heavenly Father with an unbelieving world; vindicating and attesting the faithfulness of his word, the watchfulness of his love, and the benevolent power of his holy

gospel. Withdraw your trust from those goods in which the ungodly confide, resign them to God, and thus you will be affording him an occasion for displaying his paternal love. He charges you to be careful for nothing, that he may evince his carefulness of you.

Of the poor it is said, that he who oppresseth them reproacheth his Maker;—charges God with injustice for permitting them to be poor, and for devolving their maintenance on him; insults God in the person of the poor, by refusing to charge himself with the care of them, though sent to him with promises direct from God. And thus, though God meant to employ the rich as his agents for the poor, to bind them to each other by the constant interchange of gratitude and benevolence, and to illustrate and honour his providential government, the selfishness of man frustrates his plans, and turns his honour into a reproach. In a very similar manner, he has devolved the Christian interest on his people, and the world is watching their conduct in relation to it. If they treat it as a burden, God will deem himself reproached; but let them meet its demands, and enrich it with their liberality, and the power of

his gospel and the wisdom of his arrangements will be seen, the world will render him the homage of its silent admiration, and his church will triumph in every place.

The great gospel argument for Christian liberality is *the divine example of the Redeemer's love.* "Hereby perceive we his love,"—as if every other display of love were eclipsed by the effulgence of this; as if all possible illustrations of love were summed up in this,—"Hereby perceive we his love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" How *can* the love of Christ inhabit that bosom, which is a stranger to sympathy for his people? Ill indeed does *he* pretend readiness to *die* for Christ, who will not give a little money towards the support of his cause and people.

When the apostle Paul would enjoin the Philippians to "look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others," he points them to "the mind which

was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He does not content himself with merely stating the fact of our Lord's condescension and death; but, as if he loved to linger on the subject, he traces it from stage to stage; as if the immensity of the stoop which Christ made were too great to be comprehended at once, he divides it into parts, and follows him downwards from point to point till he has reached the lowest depth of his humiliation. As if he felt convinced that the amazing spectacle, if duly considered, could not fail to annihilate selfishness in every other heart, as it had in his own, the only anxiety he evinces is that it should be seen, be vividly presented before the eye of the mind. Having carried our thoughts up to that infinite height where Christ had been from eternity in the bosom of the Father, he shows us the Son of God divesting himself of his glory; and then, he detains our

eye in a prolonged gaze on his descending course; condescending to be born; voluntarily subjecting himself to all the humbling conditions of our nature; taking on himself the responsibilities of a servant; still humbling himself, still passing from one depth of ignominy to a lower still; becoming obedient unto death; and that death the most humbling, the most replete with agony and shame, the death of the cross.

Christian, can you ever contemplate this wonderful exhibition without renewed emotions of love? without feeling afresh that you are not your own? And say, ought such grace in Christ, to be requited with parsimony in his followers? Ought such a Master to be served by grudging and covetous servants? Ought such a Saviour to have to complain that those who have been redeemed, and *who know* they have been redeemed, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with his own most precious blood, are so much attached to that corruptible wealth, that they will not part with it though urged by the claims of that most precious blood? O, shame to humanity! O, reproach to the Christian name! Be concerned, Christian, to wipe off the foul stain. Bring forth

your substance, and spread it before him. Were you to give up *all* to him, would it be *very* reprehensible, or *very* unaccountable, considering that he gave up all for you! At least, economize for Christ. Retrench, retrench your expenditure, that you may be able to increase your liberality. Deny, deny yourself for his cause, as you value consistency, as you profess to be a follower of him, "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."

In his second epistle to the Corinthians, we find the apostle enforcing the practice of Christian liberality; and various and cogent are the motives which he adduces to excite their benevolence. But we might rest assured that it would not be long before he introduced the motive of our Lord's example. The love of Christ was the actuating principle of his own conduct; it influenced him more than all other motives combined. If ever his ardour in the path of duty flagged for a moment, he glanced at the cross, thought of the great love wherewith Christ had loved him, and instantly girded on his zeal afresh. In addressing others, therefore, he never failed to introduce this motive, he relied on it as his main strength, he

brought it to bear upon them in all its subduing and constraining force.

And how tender, how pointed, how melting the appeal which he makes. "*Ye know* the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." *You know* the height from which he stooped. You know the depth of humiliation to which he descended; that he found no resting-place between his throne and the cross. You know for whom he did this; for his enemies, his destroyers. You know that he did this voluntarily, that he was under no necessary obligation to endure it; that his own love was the only obligation; that he welcomed each indignity, invited each pang, made them a part of his plan of condescension. You know how earnestly he prosecuted the work of our salvation; that in every step he took he was only gratifying the compassionate yearnings of his own heart; that he assumed life for the express purpose of laying it down: and though he saw as from a height the whole array of duty and trial which awaited him, the only emotions which he evinced at the sight were a self-consuming ardour

to reach the cross which stood at the end of his path, a holy impatience to be baptized with that baptism of blood. You know the object for which he did it all—for your salvation; that he might pour his fulness into your emptiness, his riches into your poverty; that he might raise you to heaven, and share with you the glories of his own throne.

You know this; not, indeed, in the sense of comprehending it; that is impossible, for it is a love which passeth such knowledge. But you know it by report; you have heard of it. It is the theme of the universe. Heaven resounds with it; the church on earth is full of it; the eternal Father commands it to be published throughout the world. And so amazing is it, that the bare announcement of it should be sufficient to transform selfishness itself into disinterested love. But *you* know it experimentally. You can look back on a time when you were in a state of alienation from God bordering on perdition; you have been plucked as a brand from the burning; and now you are looking forwards to eternal life with Christ in heaven; and you know that you owe your deliverance,

and all your hopes, to the grace of Christ. You know what he endured for your redemption, that he loved you, "and gave himself for you," and will you withhold from him any thing in your possession? Can you believe that he died for *you?* that, in dying, he wore *your* name upon his breast? that his heart cherished the thought of *your* happiness? that he made himself poor to enrich *you?* and will you not freely contribute of your worldly substance to diffuse the knowledge of his grace?

Did he employ his heavenly powers solely for your salvation, lay himself out for your happiness? Yes, saith he, "For their sakes I sanctify myself. I set myself apart, I appropriate all I have and am to the work of their salvation." And he did so. When did he ever go about but to do good? When did he ever open his hand but to bless? or weep, but in sympathy with human woe? What object did he ever pursue but that of benevolence? imparting life to the dying, pardon to the guilty, purity to the depraved, blessings to all around him. "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." He was the author of riches, and the

heir of all things; but all he possessed he gave for your salvation, and all that you possess you should employ for his glory. You enjoy a portion of this world's goods; consider the use which *he* would have made of it, and copy his divine example.

Did he not only employ his heavenly powers, but actually deny himself, suffer, die for your happiness? He pleased not himself. He endured the cross, despising the shame. He poured out his soul unto death. *Himself* he would not save. He would not come down from the cross. O! how did he for a season annihilate himself! How did he take our place, take our curse, and endure it all! That *was* compassion. That *was* looking on the things of others. That *was* benevolence, —disinterested, unparalleled, matchless benevolence. Let this mind be in you. Never can you hope to *equal* it, for it is infinite—the grace of a God. But so much the greater your obligation to approach it as nearly as you can.

Christian, *you* know his grace, you feel it. How much owest thou unto thy Lord? Do you ever attempt to compute the mighty sum? Endeavour to realize the idea; and if then you

feel any reluctance to consecrate your substance to him, it can only be on the ground of its utter insignificance. But he asks for it as an expression of your love—yes, he asks for it. He comes to you every time an appeal is made to your Christian liberality, and, as he turns on you a look of benignity and love, he inquires, "Lovest thou me?" And as he points to that portion of your property which ought to be devoted to his cause, he asks you again, "Lovest thou me more than this?" If so—devote it to my cause, consecrate it to my service. And he saith unto you the third time, "Lovest thou me?" If so—"feed my lambs, feed my sheep;" support my poor; aid my interest in the world; encourage every effort made to bring home my wandering sheep; think of the millions of them that are perishing, millions for whom I died; shall my love be defrauded of them? shall I not behold in them the travail of my soul and be satisfied? By the love you bear to me, and by the infinitely greater love I bear to you, imitate my love; and you know the extent of *that*, "you know the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, for your sake he became

poor, that you through his poverty might be rich."

O, Christian, study your obligations at the foot of the cross. If you would imbibe the disinterested and self-sacrificing benevolence of your blessed Lord, take your station daily at the cross. Never till you do this, will you feel the claims which he has upon you. But when you there see the great love wherewith he hath loved you, we will defy you to be covetous, inactive, selfish in his cause. You cannot fail to love him; that love cannot fail to constrain you; and constrained by *that*, you will be turned into a pains-taking, self-denying, devoted servant of Christ; to whom he will say daily, "Well done, good and faithful servant;" till the day when he will sum up all his grace by adding, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

If you are truly a Christian, you have felt that you are not your own, that you are bought with a price; in other words, you see so clearly, and feel so strongly, that you owe yourself to Christ, that you have gone to his feet and implored his acceptance of your soul. But *the dedication of yourself includes the surrender of your property.*

It is related in Roman history, that when the

people of Collatia stipulated about their surrender to the authority and protection of Rome, the question asked was, "Do you deliver up yourselves, the Collatine people, your city, your fields, your water, your bounds, your temples, your utensils, all things that are yours, both human and divine, into the hands of the people of Rome?" And on their replying, "We deliver up all,"—they were received. The voluntary surrender which you, Christian, have made to Christ, though not so detailed and specific as this formula, is equally comprehensive. And do you not account those your best moments when you feel constrained to lament that your surrender comprehends no more? Can you recall to mind the way in which he has redeemed you, the misery from which he has snatched you, and the blessedness to which he is conducting you, without feeling that he has bought you a thousand times over? that you are his by the tenderest, weightiest obligations? And when you feel thus, how utterly impossible would it be for you at such a moment to stipulate for an exception in favour of your property!—to harbour a mental reservation in favour of *that?*

Can you think of the blessedness attending the

act itself of dedication to God,—that you are wedding yourself to infinite riches, uniting yourself to infinite beauty, allying yourself to infinite excellence; giving yourself to God, and receiving God in return, so that henceforth all his infinite resources, his providence, his Son, his Spirit, his heaven, He himself, all become yours, to the utmost degree in which you can enjoy them,—can you think of this without often repeating the act? without feeling that had you all the excellencies of a myriad of angels, his love would deserve the eternal devotion of the whole? Realize to your own mind the nature of Christian dedication, and the claims of Him who calls for it, and so far from giving penuriously to his cause, you will take every increase of your substance into his presence and devote it to his praise; you will regard every appeal which is made to your Christian benevolence as an appeal to that solemn treaty which made you his, and you will honour it accordingly; you will deeply feel the penury of all riches as an expression of your love to him; Lebanon would not be sufficient to burn, or the beasts thereof an offering large enough, to satisfy the cravings of your love.

Think, moreover, of *the high design for which God condescends to accept your surrender.* Not that you may live to yourself, but entirely to him. Having disposed and enabled you to give yourself to him, he would then baptize you in the element of divine love, *and give you to the world.*

"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" to redeem it. The object, indeed, for which *he* was given was, like himself, infinite; an object which never *can* be shared, and which never need be repeated. But the office to which God designates every man from the moment of his conversion is meant to be a new donation to the world. The relation in which he places him to the world is meant to be a fresh expression of the same infinite love which prompted him to give Christ; it is to be viewed as nothing less than a symbolical representation to the world of that *unspeakable gift.* He is not *that* gift, but is sent to bear witness of that gift; not merely to announce it with his lips, but to describe and commemorate its fulness and freeness in his own character. Like his blessed Lord, he is to look upon himself as dedicated to the cause of human happiness, dedicated from eternity.

Christian, you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,—might the world infer the existence of his grace from your conduct? Is your benevolence worthy of him who, "though he was rich, for your sake became poor?" He turned himself into a fountain of grace and love, and called you to be a Christian that you might be a consecrated channel of his grace to others. He requires all the benevolent agency of heaven and earth to be put into motion, in order to do justice to the purposes of his love; and he has called you into his service in order to increase that agency. Surely you are not, by the love of money, frustrating that design. As well for the perishing world had he never died for its salvation, if his appointed and consecrated agents neglect to make him known. Surely you are not, by living only to yourself, by wasting your property on yourself as fast as he gives it to you, leaving the world to infer that his character bore any resemblance to yours; and leaving it, besides, to perish under your eye, because an effort to save it would incur expense. You have not, you cannot, have so learned Christ. But what then *are* you giving? more than the heathen to his idol-god? more than the votary of

a corrupted Christianity to the object of his superstitious regard? or more than the irreligious worldling devotes to pleasure and self-indulgence? "What do ye more than others?"

Consider also *the happy influence which a spirit of Christian liberality would have on your own enjoyment.* By taking from the flesh the means of self-indulgence, it would be exalting the spirit. It would be enlarging your heart, and ennobling your character, and identifying you with all things good, and glorious, and happy in the universe. Much as it might benefit the cause of God, it would still more minister to the welfare and happiness of your own soul.

Devise liberal things, and by liberal things you shall stand. Taste the luxury of doing good, and you will regret that you began so late. Select for imitation the loftiest examples—the few distinguished names whose praise is in all the churches—and you will be conscious of a delight which an angel might be grateful to share. God himself is the happiest being because he is the most benevolent, and you would then in the most exalted sense be holding fellowship with him, you would understand experimentally the saying of our Lord

Jesus Christ, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," you would make all the beneficence of the world your own by the complacency with which you would behold it exercised and enjoyed.

But the motives to Christian charity are endless. *The state of the world requires it.* How vast its multitudes; how urgent and awful their condition; how brief the hour for benefiting them; how mighty the interest pending on that short hour! Look where you will, your eye will encounter signals to be active; myriads of objects, in imploring or commanding attitudes, urging you to come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

The church calls for it. It has many an agent of mercy to send forth, if you will but aid to furnish the means. It has many a generous purpose in its heart, many a long-cherished and magnanimous project ready to leap to its lips, if your liberality should encourage it to speak. It burns with a holy impatience to reap the vast harvest of the heathen world which providence seems to have prepared and to be keeping for its sickle,—will you not aid to send forth more labourers into the harvest? It has been slumbering at its post for

ages, it is now awaking to an alarmed consciousness of its neglected responsibilities, and, as it counts up its long arrears of duty, it hastens to atone for the past by instituting one society, and adopting one remedy after another, and sending its agents to plead for help from its members in the name of Christ,—and will you not help it in its straits? A proportion of its guilt is lying upon you,—will you not aid it to retrieve the past? and assist it to recover and present to the world its primitive aspect of love and zeal?

The Christians of apostolic times call for it. Benevolence was their characteristic. A selfish Christian was a contradiction of which they were happily ignorant. For such an anomaly their church had provided no place; they would have cast him forth from among them as a disgrace. They had the grand secret of giving up all for Christ, and yet accounting themselves rich; the art of taking *joyfully* the spoiling of their goods; the principle of finding their happiness in living to God, in spending and being spent in his service. It would have been difficult to convince them that they were in danger of giving too freely to the cause of Christ; that they were *denying them-*

selves in giving so much to him instead of consuming it on their own lusts, when they felt they were gratifying themselves by so doing. It would have been difficult to convince them that their interest was distinct from the interest of Christ; or that they had any occasion for tears while his kingdom was prospering, or any reason to exult in their own secular prosperity if it did not subserve the advancement of his cause. They could not be depressed; for their Lord had arisen, and was reigning on the throne of heaven. At that thought, they not only rejoiced themselves, they called on the universe to rejoice with them; for they saw, in his exaltation, the pledge of the world's salvation, and of an eternity of happiness with him in heaven. What, to them, were a few intervening days of trial and pain? They thought not of such things! What, to them, was a question of property, whether much or little? Not worth the price of a thought! If they had it, they gave it to that service to which they had given themselves. If they had it not, they did not for a moment speak of it as a *want;* or think of asking the cause of the world's salvation to stand still, while they were engaged in a scramble with the world to obtain it.

The vision of heaven was in their eye; and, until they reached it, their Lord had engaged to provide for all their wants, and had engaged to do this solely that they might give their undivided attention to his service. Of doubts and fears about their personal interest in his love, they appear to have known nothing; *that* is a disease peculiar to the morbid and selfish piety of modern days. The element of activity and benevolence in which they lived, secured them against such a malady, and produced a race of Christians, vigorous, holy, and happy.

And is it from such, Christian, that you profess to have descended? do you claim relationship to them? profess to represent them? Bending from their seats of blessedness above, they urge, they beseech you, to cast off the worldly spirit in which you have hitherto indulged, and to take up their fallen mantle. They entreat you no longer to disgrace their name, nor the infinitely dearer name of Christ; to renounce it at once as the greatest homage you can pay to it, or else to follow them as far as they followed Christ. They all expect this from you; they will demand it at your hands when you meet them at the bar of God.

The promises and prospects of prophecy invite it. Muse on the prophetic paintings of the latter day glory, that day without a cloud;—the enemies of man subdued, the disorders of the world hushed, all its great miseries passed away. Christ on his throne; in the midst of a redeemed, sanctified, happy creation. All things sacred to his name; all tongues rehearsing for the last great chorus of the universe; all hearts united in holy love, and in that love offering themselves up as one everlasting sacrifice ascending before him in its own flames; new heavens, and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. And is it possible that your agency can contribute to accelerate that blessed period? These glimpses of its glory are afforded you expressly to engage your agency in its behalf. Not only is your instrumentality desirable, there is a sense in which it is indispensable. All things are waiting for it. All things are ready but the church of Christ; and until its prayers, its wealth, all its energies and resources, are laid at the feet of Christ, all things must continue to wait.

O, then, by the mercies of God; by the riches of his goodness towards you in nature, providence,

and grace; by the sacredness of the commands which he has laid upon you; by a legitimate regard for your own well-being; and by the credit of that religion whose honour should be dearer to you than life, we beseech you, Christian, to dedicate your property to God. By the love of Christ; by the compassion which brought him from the bosom of the Father; by his painful self-denial and deep humiliation; by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross; O by that mystery of love which led him to become poor that he might make you eternally rich, ask yourself, while standing at the cross, "How much owest thou unto thy Lord?" and give accordingly. By the tender and melting considerations which led you at first to surrender yourself to his claims; by the benevolent purposes which God had in view in calling you to a knowledge of himself; and by the deep and holy pleasure to be found in imitating his divine beneficence, look on your property as the Lord's, and give it freely to his glory. By the cries of the world perishing in ignorance of Christ; by the earnest entreaties of the church yearning to save it from destruction, but wanting your aid; as you profess

to admire the unparalleled benevolence of the first Christians, and to be actuated by the same principles; and as you hope to behold the consummation of your Saviour's glory in the salvation of the world, we entreat, we adjure you to look on your property as given you by God to be employed in his service, and from this day to employ it accordingly. He who gave his only begotten Son for your salvation,—he who redeemed you from the curse of the law by being made a curse for you,—he who has breathed into you the breath of a new life, and is preparing you for heaven,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, unite, in urging you to bring forth your property, and to lay it upon the altar of Christian sacrifice.

And now, Christian, what shall be the *practical effect* of the truths which have been made to pass before you? Allow me, in conclusion, to suggest what it ought to be: and may God the Holy Spirit give you grace to carry it into practice!

Have you, while reading the preceding pages, felt a single emotion of benevolence warm and expand your heart? *Instantly gratify it.* Let it

not pass from you in an empty wish; but immediately bring forth something to be appropriated to his glory.

Is your benevolence destitute of plan? Then, unless you can gainsay what we have advanced on the necessity of *system, lose no time in devising one.*

Are you a stranger to self-denial in the cause of charity? Then, remember that benevolence, with you, has yet to be begun; for, on Christian principles, *there is no benevolence without self-denial.*

Here, then, is *an object to take you at once to the throne of grace.* O Christian, let it lead you to pour out your soul in prayer before God. Confess *that* selfishness by which you have hitherto absorbed so much of that property in worldly indulgences, which ought to have been spent in his service. Ask him for the grace of self-denial; that your offerings may henceforth bear a proportion to the magnitude of his claims. Beseech him to pour out his Holy Spirit upon you and upon all his people, as a Spirit of Christian liberality, that "Holiness to the Lord" may soon be inscribed on all the property of his

There is too much of the idea that God's Service is exclusively [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible].

church. "He who soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. And God loveth a cheerful giver."

THE END.

This ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor!

not that he cared for the poor but he had the

& kept what was put therein

W. Tyler, Printer, Bolt-court, Fleet-street.